

WILLIAM B. ROBB: AN ARCHITECT'S IMPACT ON FORT COLLINS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Early Life & Education.....	2-3
1950-1959.....	4
American Baptist Church.....	5
Putnam Elementary School.....	6-7
Fort Collins City Hall.....	8-14
Moore & Barton Elementary Schools.....	15-16
1960-1969.....	17
Bennett & O'Dea Elementary Schools.....	18
St. Joseph's Catholic Church: School Remodel.....	19
Chapel in the Pines.....	20-22
First Methodist Church.....	23-27
St. Luke's Episcopal Church.....	28-31
Prototype Elementary Schools.....	32-34
1970-1979.....	35
Poudre School District Administration Building.....	36-42
Indian Meadows West Apartment Development.....	43-49
Home Federal Savings & Loan Tower Addition.....	50-53
Home Federal Savings & Loan University Branch.....	54-56
Eyestone Elementary School.....	57-59
Laurel & Juan Fullana Elementary Schools.....	60-64
1980-1989.....	65
Scotch Pines Village Shops & Apartments.....	66-67
RB+B Architects After William Robb.....	68-69
The Lasting Legacy of William B. Robb.....	70-72

INTRODUCTION

William B. Robb, more commonly known as Bill Robb, was a prominent architect whose prolific work shaped the face of Fort Collins, Colorado. When he moved to Fort Collins in the early 1950's he was the first person to establish a local architecture firm. As Fort Collins quickly grew in size, so did the firm's reputation for impeccable work. Their work was known for being economical, functional, and innovative, as well as being aesthetically pleasing additions to the community. Robb was able to achieve this reputation by approaching each new project with an open mind, without any preconceived notions of what the design should be. His only goal was to create a design that was the most beneficial for the client, based on their needs, wants, and budget. Robb described the process as making "an individual style for each of our buildings" which was shaped by the program and building requirements.

Fort Collins was not only Bill Robb's place of business, but also where he raised a family and a community he was deeply involved in. He was a member of the Fort Collins Regional Planning Commission, Community Council of Fort Collins, Citizens Committee of Fort Collins Schools, Chamber of Commerce, Colorado Society of Architects, Kiwanis, and the Colorado Northern Chapter of American Institute of Architects. Robb was quoted as saying, "We feel when you are close to your work, you can form a close relationship with your client and provide a better service." His love for the town and its citizens is evident in all aspects of his body of work. It would be very hard to find someone living in Fort Collins who has not stepped foot into a building designed by William Robb or his firm, RB+B.

EARLY LIFE & EDUCATION



Bill Robb in uniform (left), Bill Robb with his wife and children (below)



Bill Robb was born on August 9, 1922 in Pueblo, Colorado. Shortly thereafter, his family moved to Durango, Colorado where he spent the rest of his childhood. After graduating high school, Bill joined the United States Army and served in World War II. As the pilot of a B-26 bomber, he was responsible for leading 33 missions over Germany during the course of the war. Once the war ended, Bill returned home and married his high school sweetheart, Eleanor. They started a family which would eventually include six children; Sue, Bruce, Cynthia, Christine, Joanne, and Pamela.

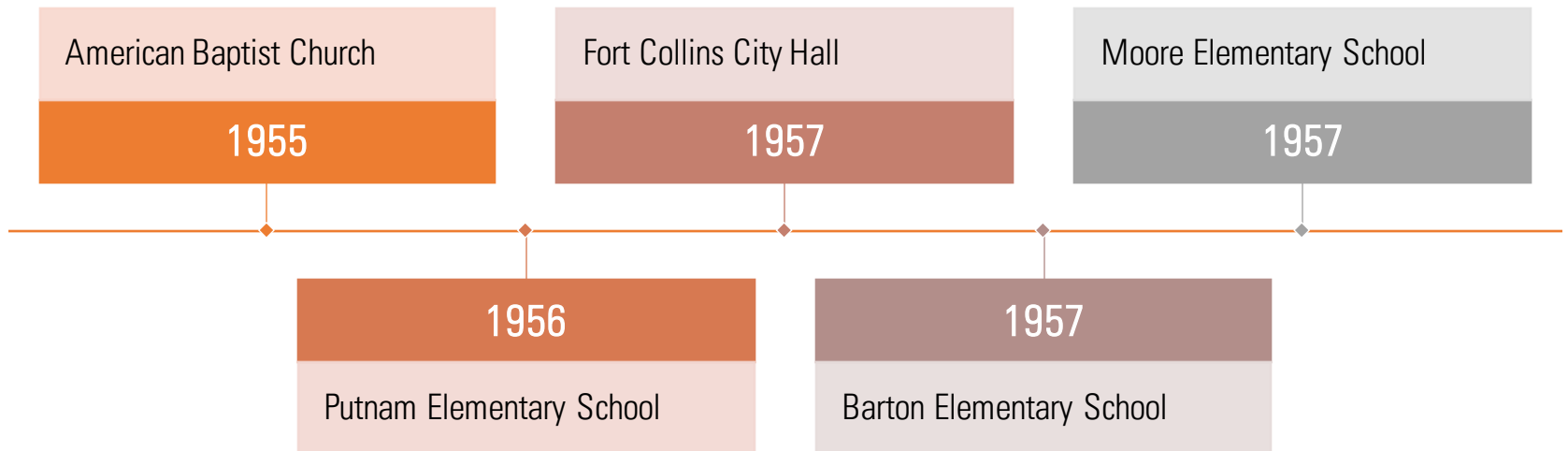
EARLY LIFE & EDUCATION

Due to his affinity for mathematics, logical way of thinking, and appreciation for creativity, Bill decided to pursue a Bachelor's of Science degree in Architectural Engineering from University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado in his pursuit to become an architect. After completing this degree in 1947, Bill went on to complete a Masters in Structural Engineering in 1948 from the same university. Bill, his wife, and their two young children then moved to Boston after he was accepted into the Architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1951, he graduated from M.I.T. with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Architecture before moving back to Colorado Front Range.

In 1953, Bill Robb became a licensed Architect in the State of Colorado and moved to Fort Collins, Colorado to start his own architecture firm. At the time it was considered a risky move by many because Fort Collins was a small "cow-town" known only for being the location of Colorado A&M, now named Colorado State University. Where most people saw a dead-end, Bill Robb saw potential. When he opened his firm William B. Robb, Architect he was the only architect listed in the Fort Collins City Directory. Bill knew work would be limited at the beginning and "versatility became the rule" in order to bring in a wider scope of work. He is quoted as saying "I was almost like a country doctor, because I did everything". At the time local builders and clients were not used to having an architect in town but Bill Robb's perseverance and open-minded approach soon showed them how valuable a resource that could be.

1950 - 1959

After establishing William B Robb, Architect in 1953, Bill Robb received his first major job, designing the American Baptist Church. Between 1944 and 1955 Fort Collins had doubled in size which meant there was a larger need for new buildings in many sectors. "When I first came here, there wasn't a lot of building, and the university was only half as big as it is now. The town's growth was steady and slow. Then the town became a city. Construction really boomed" according to Bill Robb. Throughout the decade Bill Robb was also commissioned to design Putnam, Moore, and Barton Elementary Schools for Poudre School District. These were the first of many schools he would design for the district. Along with schools, Robb was also commissioned to design the new Fort Collins City Hall. By the end of the decade, Robb had become an established Fort Collins architect with a reputation for innovation designs.



AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCH

Year Completed: 1955

Cost: \$100,000

Contractor: Hy Porter (Fort Collins, CO)

The design of this church was known for the unique architectural elements in its sanctuary, rostrum, and altar. The curved lines of the walls leading into the ceiling leads the eyes of the congregation to the front of the sanctuary where the cross is prominently displayed. This was the first project for William Robb and was very positively received by the client. It also established his use of innovative architectural design while fulfilling the client's needs. As of 2020, American Baptist Church is still currently in use.



Exterior view of American Baptist Church (top)

Interior view of sanctuary (below)



PUTNAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Year Completed: 1956

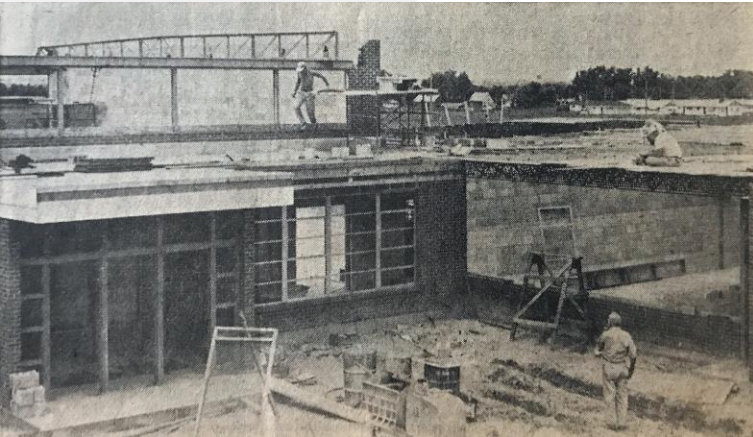
Cost: \$274,973

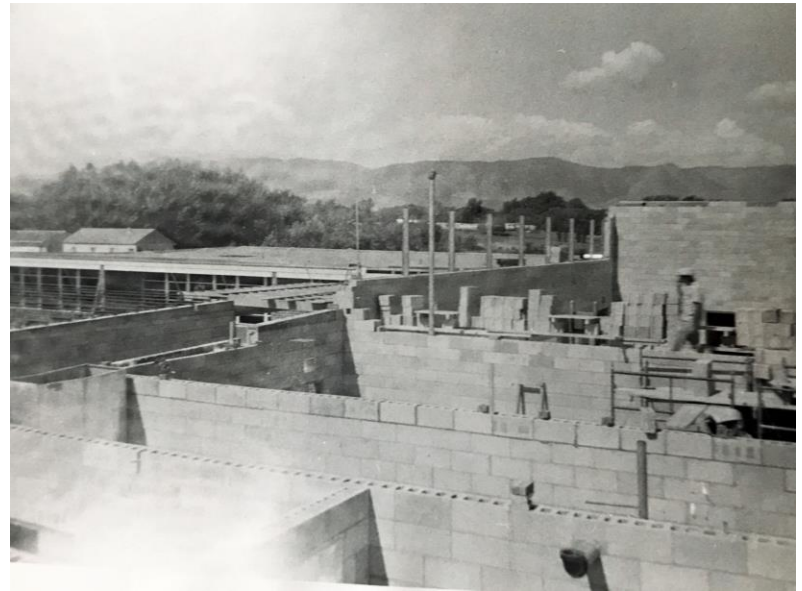
Contractor: Hensel Phelps (Greeley, CO)

William Robb's career in Fort Collins has largely been defined by his school designs for Poudre School District and Putnam Elementary was the start of that relationship. This elementary school located in northwest Fort Collins featured 13 classrooms which would quickly be filled by the growing town population. As of 2020, Putnam Elementary is still currently is use by Poudre School District.



Bill Robb, on the right, supervising metalwork (left), Putnam Elementary under construction (below)





Construction photos of Putnam Elementary School

FORT COLLINS CITY HALL

Year Completed: 1958

Cost: \$410,000

Contractor: Cascade Construction Co. (Boulder, CO)

As Fort Collins grew in size and population it became apparent that more space was needed for the municipal offices. Bill Robb received the commission to design the new Fort Collins City Hall, his first prominent building in the city. At the time, the municipal offices were still located in the original City Hall that was established in 1882 when the town only had 2,000 citizens. They were now responsible for handling the affairs for 25,000 inhabitants. The new 25,700 sq. ft. City Hall would house the city's finance, utility, electrical, police, planning, and health facilities along with all clerical and administrative offices. The Fire Department would take over the old 8,7000 sq. ft. City Hall.



Exterior of Fort Collins City Hall (top)

Interior photo of City Hall (below)



FORT COLLINS CITY HALL

Washington Park was chosen as the site for the new building, as it was close to the center of town, but the area wasn't congested which would help reduce any parking problems. Bill Robb designed the building to have three wings for an "efficient division of work" which created a Y-shape with a central lobby space. The central lobby was accessible from every parking area with three public entrances and private entrances to the basements of each wing. On the basement level of the main hub were two large lounges, one for men and one for women. The first and second floor contain the main lobby, elevator, telephones, directory, work area, central information area, and all the utilities for building.

Each of the three wings was designed to have flexible interiors that could be adapted to respond to the changing needs of the city. The first of these wings was the police wing. The basement of the police wing included a "target range, locker room facilities, storage space and a large police vault" with a private stairway to the floors above. On the first floor of the wing is the desk sergeant's area with a public counter and waiting area for civilians. Off the public area is a "separate prisoners' counter and interrogation room". The office for the Chief of Police, an office for detectives, and a squad room make up the rest of the first floor. A courtroom and jail area make up the second floor of the wing. The jail area is comprised of six two-man cells, two juvenile cells, a women's cell, and a day area which were all arranged to give maximum safety for the occupants of the building. The other part of the floor is made up of the police court with an adjoining judge's chamber.

FORT COLLINS CITY HALL

The utility and administrative wing is second of the three wings. The basement of this wing is comprised of shop and work areas for the Water and Electric departments, storage, space for the janitor, and a large dead vault for use by the Utility Department. One of the main features on the first floor was the drive-up teller window where citizens could pay utility bills. The rest of the first floor included a large, open utilities office, a machine billing room, an accounting room, a large live vault, and the Electrical Superintendent's office. On the second floor were the offices for the City Manager, City Attorney, and police judge. There was also space for the Health Department including office area and a laboratory space. A council room with a capacity of 104 people, along with a consulting room for use by the City Manager for conferences and City Council as a private deliberating chamber, made up the rest of the second floor of this wing.

The finance and engineering wing makes up the last section of the building. In the basement is a large home economics room for the "demonstration purposes of equipment in conjunction with the City Light and Power Department. A food laboratory and large dead vault for the Finance Department were also located in the basement. The City Clerk's office, Finance Director's office, an audit and budget control room, and a large office and work area for the Finance Department comprised the first floor. On the second floor was the Director of Purchases office, the Building Inspector's office, the City Engineer's office, a large drafting room for the Engineering Department, a large vault for the Engineering Department, a storage room for drawings, and an office for either the City Planner or Civil Defense.

FORT COLLINS CITY HALL

The main goals Bill Robb had when designing this building were to make it as economical as possible while making sure the space was functional and comfortable to work in for its inhabitants. By choosing to design the building in a Y-shape it allowed Robb to incorporate the maximum number of office spaces while making sure each office had a window that provided the user with natural light. Easy access and circulation were also key priorities in the design of the building so it could run as efficiently as possible. It was important for the client to have spaces that would allow intercommunication between departments and were flexible so they could adapt to future changes. Even the electrical fixtures and air-conditioning units could easily be moved between different ceiling panels to make it easy to adapt to changing office arrangements. The three-story structure was constructed out of reinforced concrete to give the building structural integrity but also because it requires less maintenance. Even decisions that seemed frivolous, such as heated walkways, terraces, and driveways, were made to reduce maintenance costs by eliminating the build-up of snow and ice.

FORT COLLINS CITY HALL



Exterior of Fort Collins City Hall (top)

Interior photo of jail area in City Hall (below)



The cornerstone for the new building was placed on the 93rd anniversary of the founding of Fort Collins and was officially completed in 1957. Once completed, the new City Hall was Modern in design but featured a brick and stone façade, wisely chosen by Bill Robb, to reflect similar materials used in surrounding older buildings to connect to the character of Fort Collins. It represented the exciting advancements of a “young, growing city in a booming state” with a nod to the town’s history. An article about the new City Hall quoted city officials saying they were looking forward to working in the building “because it will give them modern, flexible and efficient space in which to conduct their constantly expanding business”.

The building was used as the Fort Collins City Hall until 1992 when the Fort Collins Police took over the use of the building and as of 2020, it is being used by City Operations.



Interior photos of Fort Collins City Hall

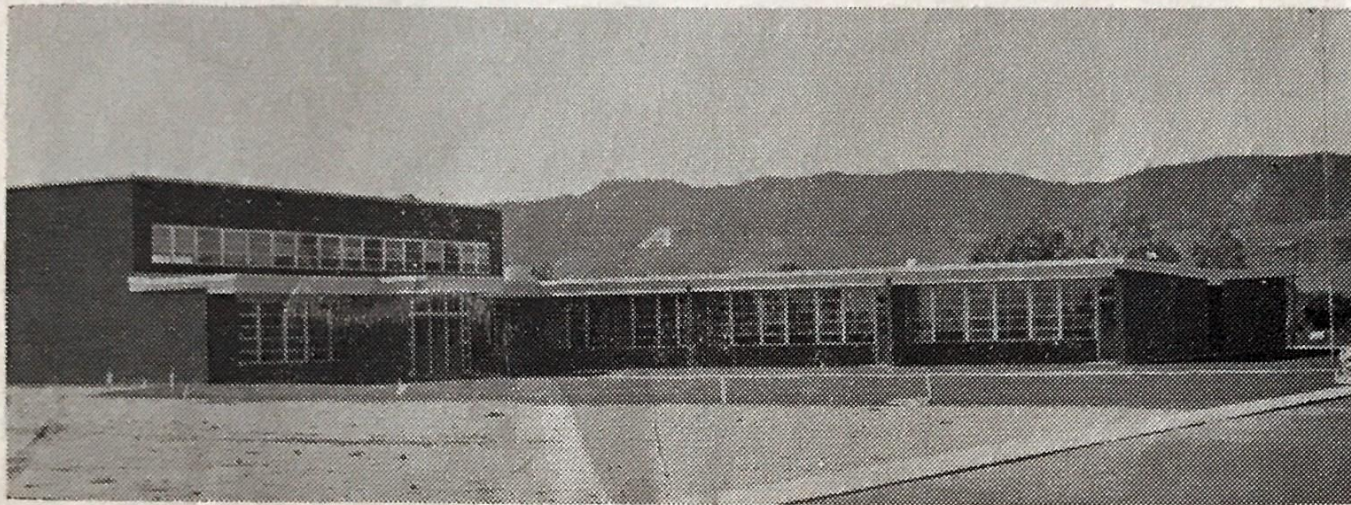
MOORE & BARTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Year Completed: 1957

Cost: \$187,074

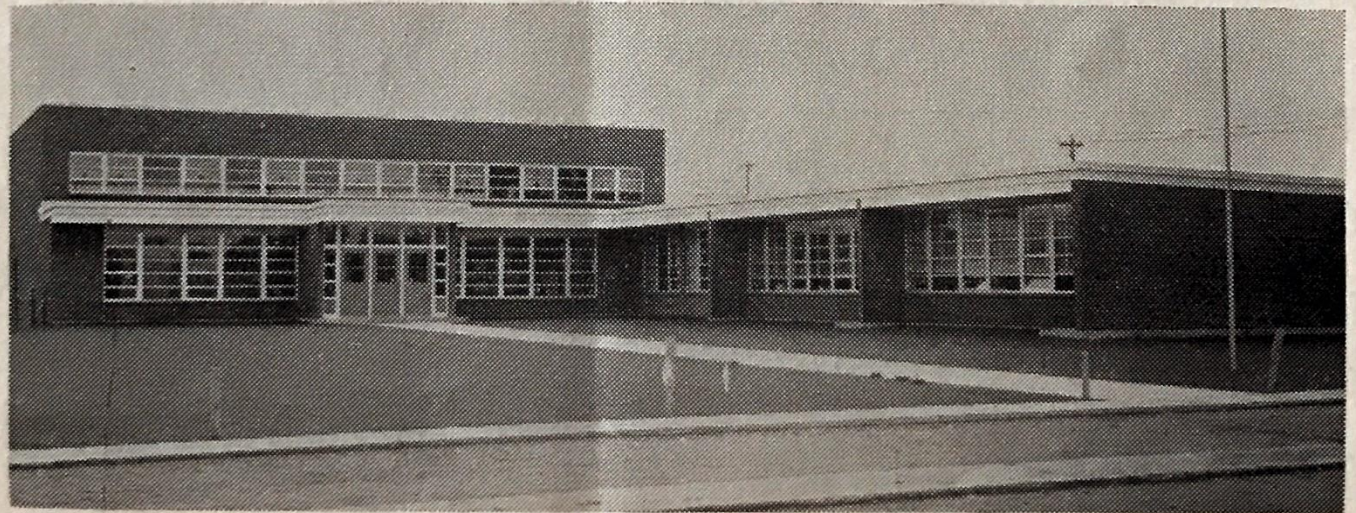
Contractor: Hensel Phelps (Greeley, CO)

The next expansion of Poudre School District included two new elementary schools designed by Bill Robb. The sites for both schools had been previously purchased in 1955 but construction was not fully completed until the end of 1957. The two elementary school buildings were completely identical in both construction and planning. The design of the buildings was also based on Robb's design for Putnam Elementary, his previous Poudre School District project. This strategy was chosen on purpose by Bill Robb to make it more economical for the school district. By using his previous school design and duplicating it, he was able to bill the district for fewer design hours. Each school had seven classrooms and a multi-purpose room that could be used as flexible space. The design also included space for a wing to be added later if more space was needed. The addition of another wing would make the buildings duplicates of Putnam Elementary. Moore Elementary was closed in 2011 and later reopened as a charter school. Barton Elementary was eventually closed and the building was used for the Fort Collins Discovery Museum. The building is currently housing the PSD Global Academy, as of 2020.



Jessie R. Moore Elementary School

Exterior of Moore Elementary School from the school's dedication program (left)

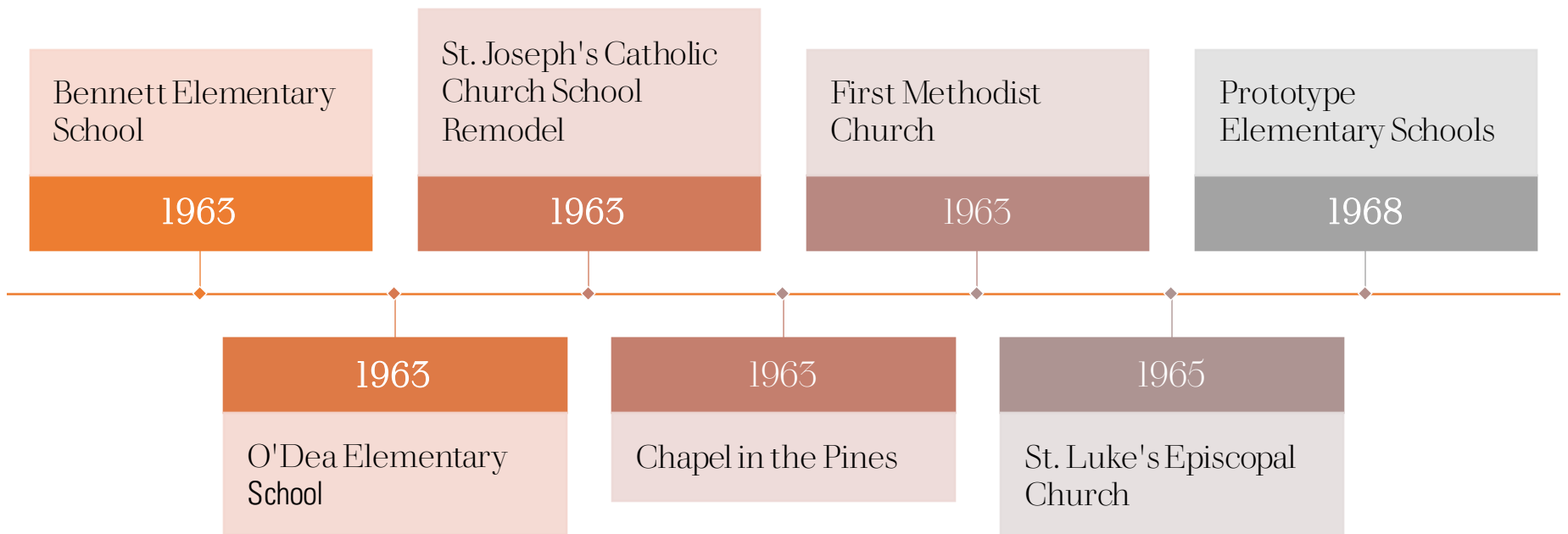


Sue and Minnie Barton Elementary School

Exterior of Barton Elementary School from the school's dedication program (right)

1960 - 1969

During the 1960's Bill Robb continued his trend of forward-thinking projects by creating innovative designs, especially in the education and religious sectors. He continued to gain commissions for new schools from Poudre School District and started to establish his reputation as the first-choice architect for educational design in Fort Collins. This decade was also when Bill Robb designed some of his most iconic religious projects that still serve as well-known Fort Collins landmarks. The 1960's marks the start of Bill Robb's projects not only being recognized as ground-breaking designs on a local level but from a national one as well.



BENNETT & O'DEA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Bennett Elementary School

Year Completed: 1963

Cost: \$300,976

Contractor: Frank Johnson (Fort Collins, CO)

O'Dea Elementary School

Year Completed: 1963

Cost: \$300,191

Contractor: Frank Johnson (Fort Collins, CO)

As Fort Collins continued to grow, so did the need for new schools. Poudre School District commissioned Bill Robb to design two new elementary schools. He once again designed the two elementary school plans to be identical in order to make the project more economical; the same strategy he had used for Moore and Barton Elementary schools. As of 2020, both Bennett Elementary and O'Dea Elementary are in use by Poudre School District.



Barton Elementary School



O'Dea Elementary School

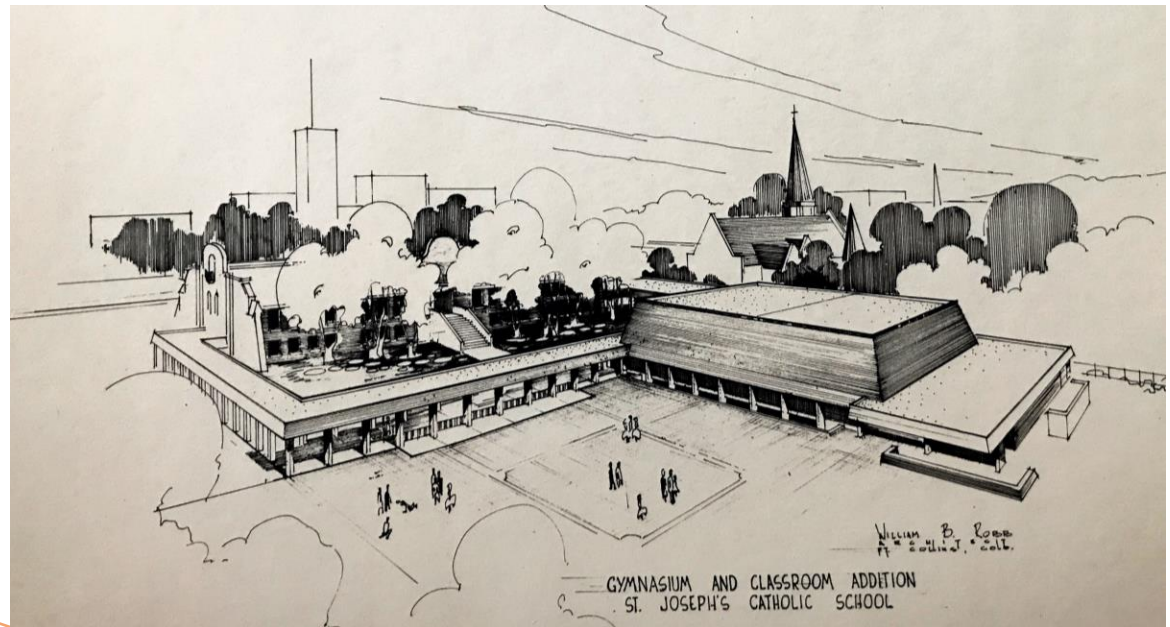
ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH: SCHOOL REMODEL

Year Completed: 1963

Cost: \$336,000

Contractor: Frank Johnson Construction (Fort Collins, CO)

St. Joseph's Catholic Church, and the adjoining school, have been a mainstay of downtown Fort Collins since the early 1900's and as the town population grew in the 1960's it became evident that expansion was needed. Bill Robb was chosen to add four classrooms and new gymnasium on to the school building. He also remodeled the original gymnasium into a cafeteria and additional classrooms. After the remodel, the school was able to house eight grades and had the capacity for 300 students. The Saint Joseph's Catholic Church and school are still in use as of 2020.



Drawing of St. Joseph's Catholic School

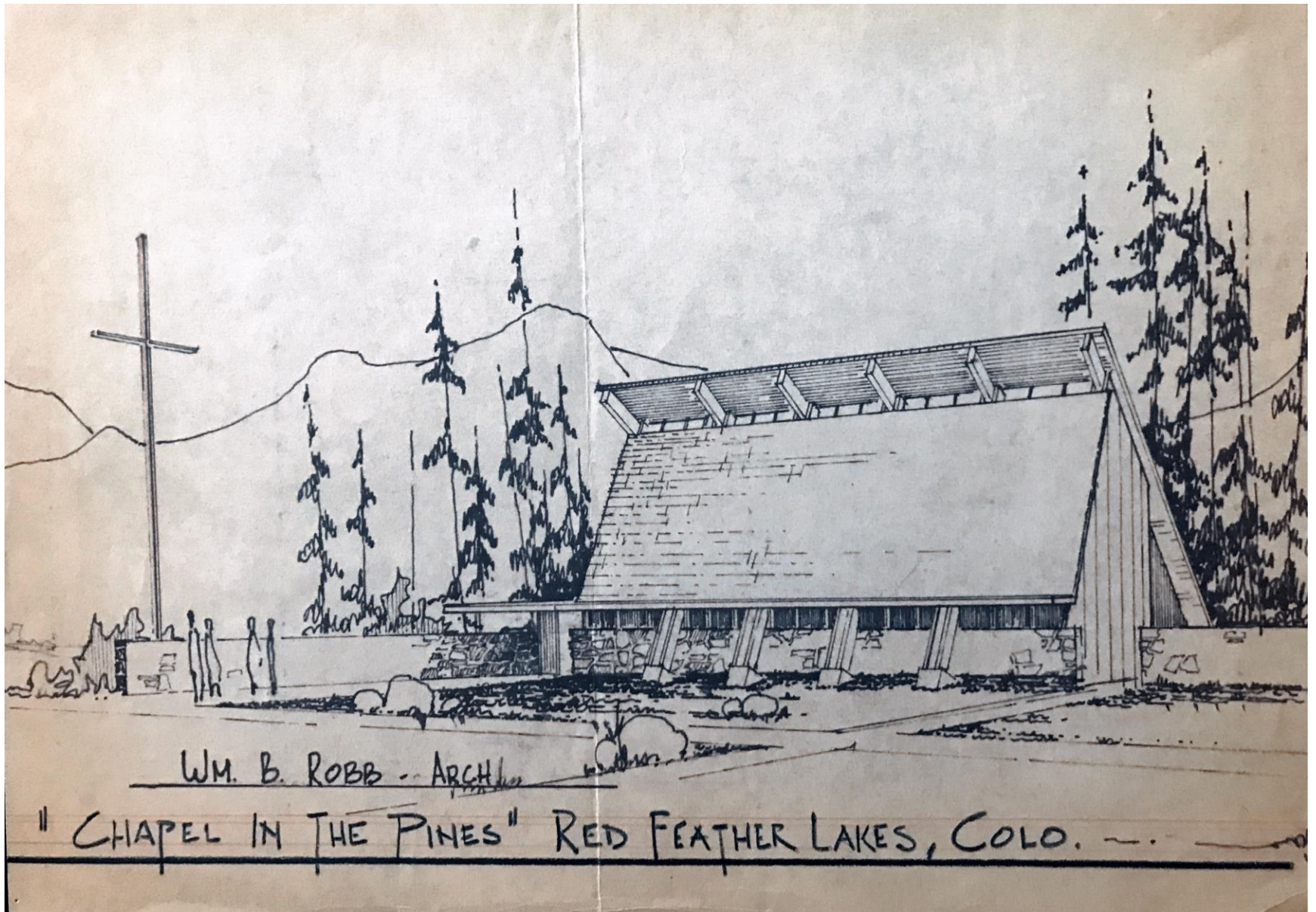
CHAPEL IN THE PINES

Year Completed: 1963

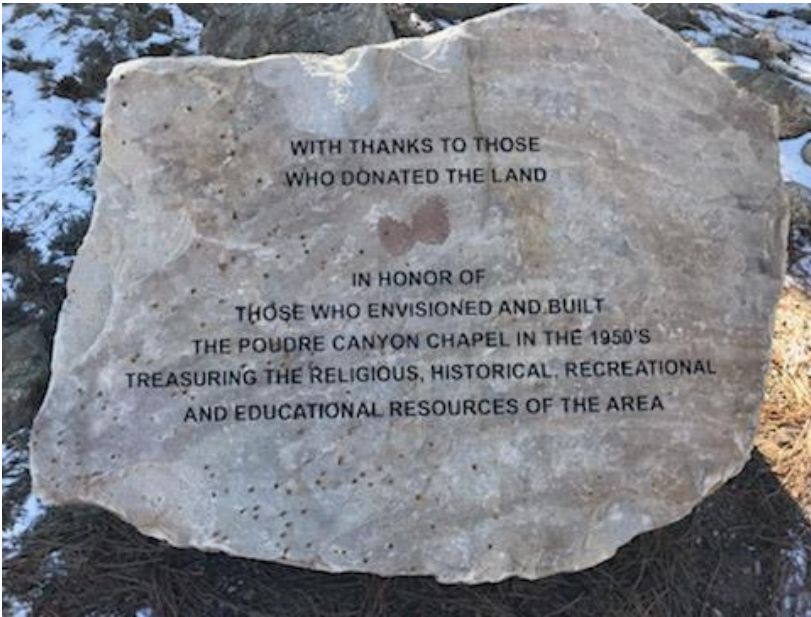
Cost: \$15,777

Contractor: Gene Barker (Red Feather Lakes, CO)

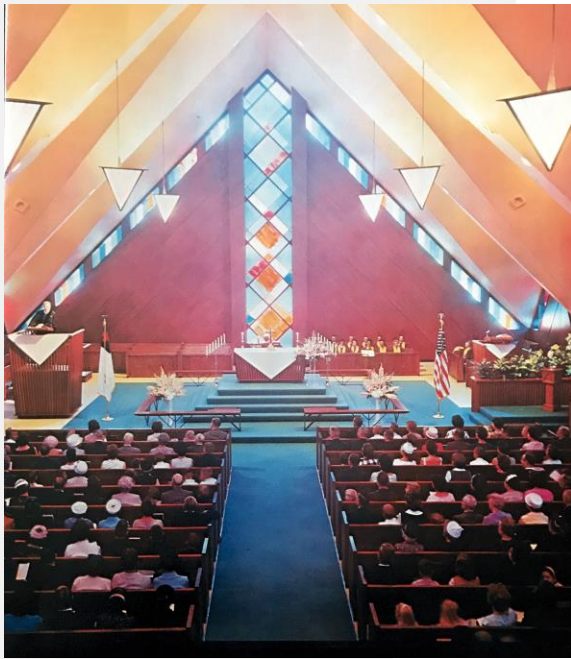
While this project isn't located in Fort Collins, it showcases the importance Bill Robb put on making sure the design of a project embraced its surroundings. He believed the site was an important aspect of a project and should be integrated, not overlooked, into the design of a building. The natural mountain setting of this chapel is reflected in its design. The chapel was designed for a congregation in Red Feather Lakes, Colorado which had been around since the 1920's but had never a permanent place to worship. In 1961, they decided it was time to build a chapel and after the land was donated in 1962, they hired Bill Robb as the architect. The first service was held the following summer on July 21, 1963. The Chapel in the Pines celebrated its 50th anniversary of the chapel being built in 2013 and is still in use today.



Drawing of the original design for Chapel in the Pines



Exterior of Chapel in the Pines (2020) and dedication plaque (bottom left)



First Methodist Church sanctuary (top)

First Methodist Church chapel (below)



FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

Year Completed: 1963

Cost: \$735,643

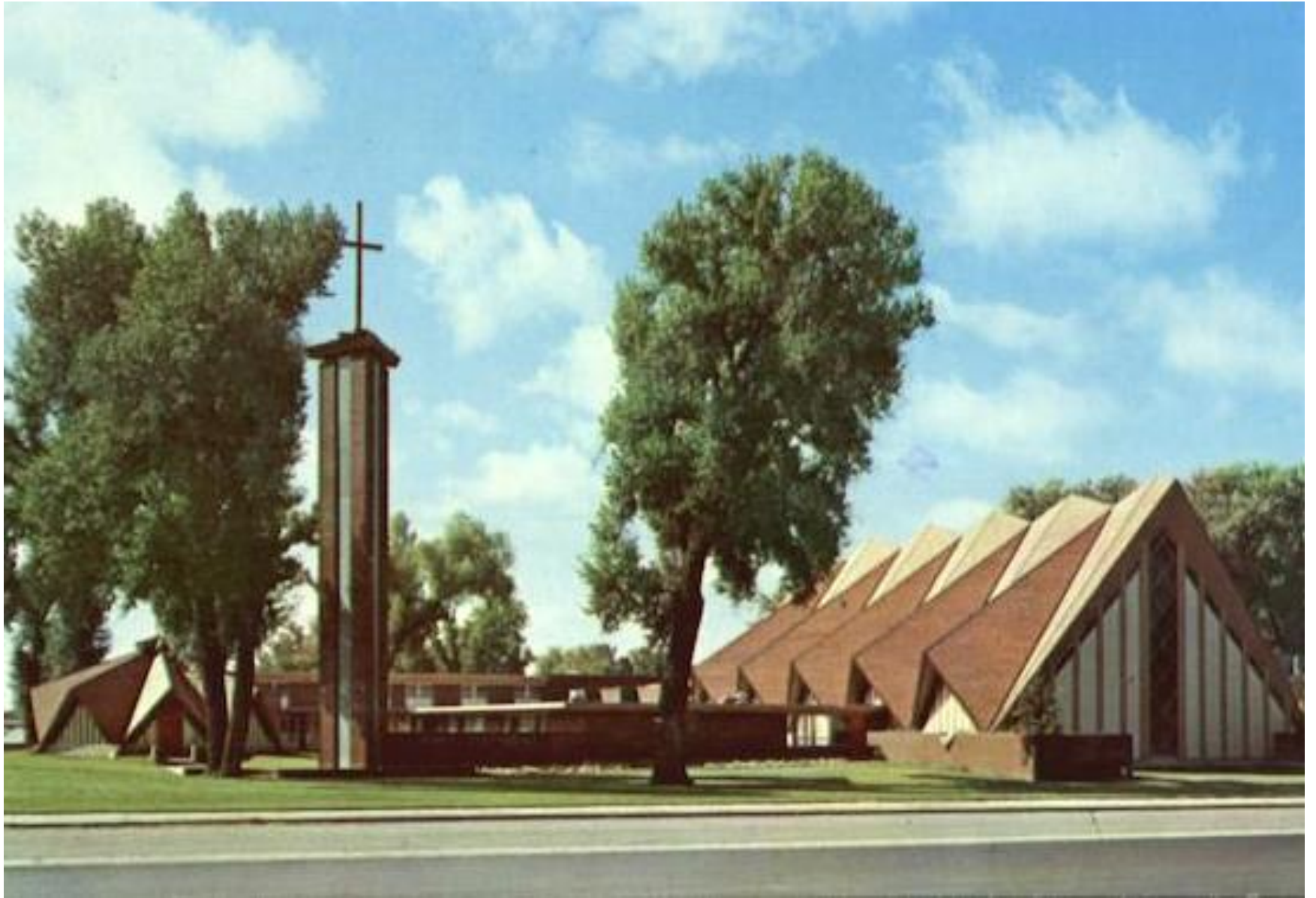
Contractor: Cook & Mills Contractors (Fort Collins, CO)

When Bill Robb designed the First United Methodist Church his goal was to combine the tradition of a church with a more modern approach to religious architecture. The most iconic part of the structure is the folded-plate style roof comprised of 40 triangular panels. The triangular shapes that dominate the roof structure in the sanctuary are representative of the Holy Trinity as a “contemporary expression of an old tradition”. Robb chose to incorporate the folded element of the roof because it was the most economical way to span the large distance of the building but also as a symbol of strength. He described the symbolism of the folded roof as gaining strength, “much as a single piece of paper folded in a number of folds is more supportive than if it is lying flat”. Stained glass was used in each fold to accentuate the undulations of the interior roof line. As another way to blend tradition with modern, the stained glass “depicts religious colors rather than religious scenes” including blue, red, purple, and green.

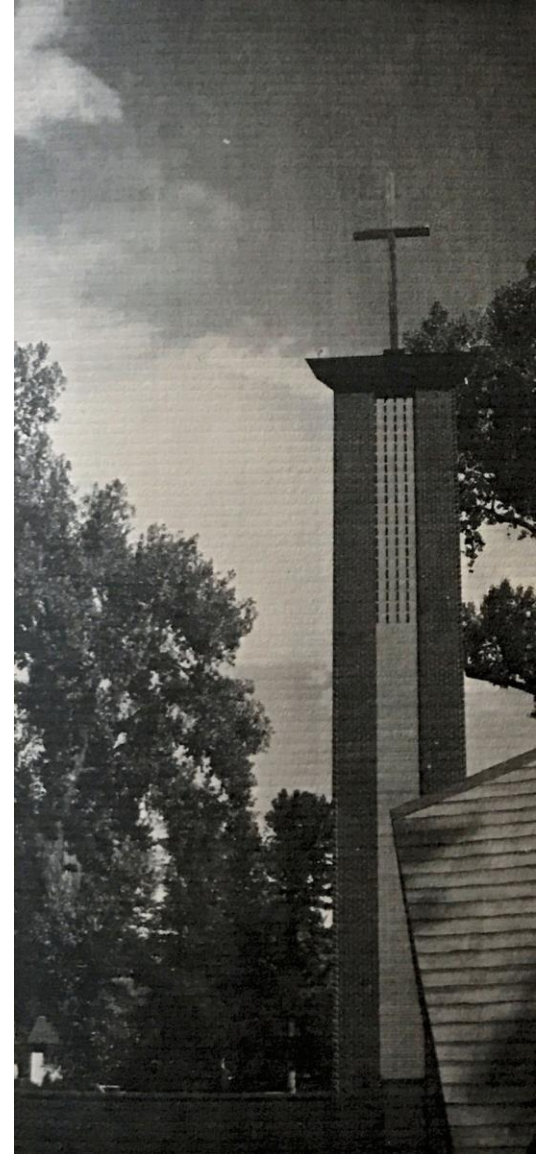
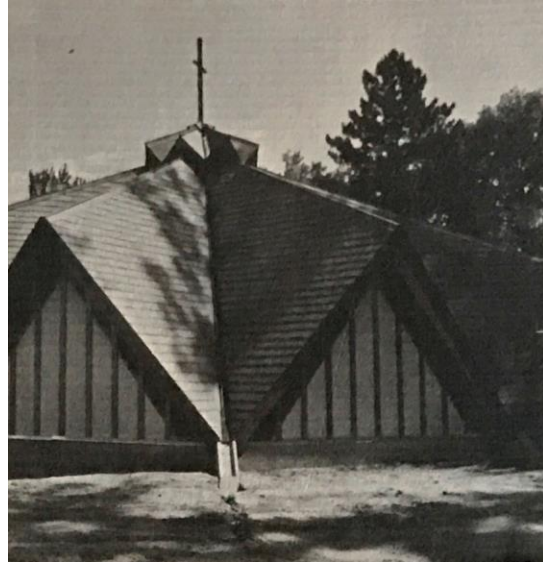
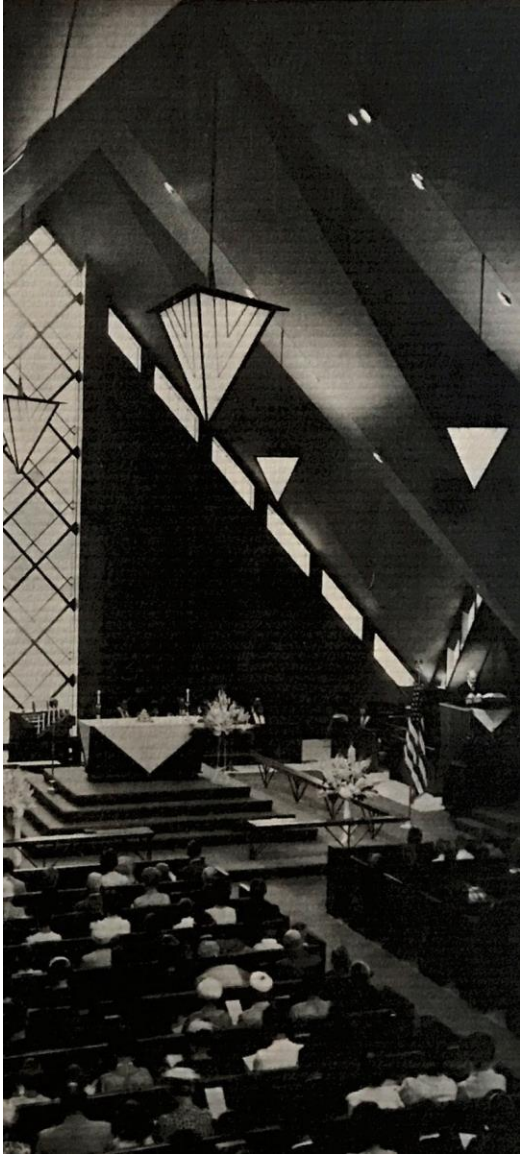
FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

The 53,000 sq. ft. project used a semi-campus plan that allowed fellowship, worship, education, and administration activities to easily relate to each other. Overall, the project included a sanctuary, fellowship hall, chapel, two-story educational wing, administration wing, variety of parlors for community gatherings, and courtyards for outside activities. The sanctuary holds up to 900 people but can be fully opened up to the Fellowship Hall to allow for up to 1,300 people. The balcony in the sanctuary was designed in a way so that no posts were obstructing the view of the chapel area. Courtyards around the site are bordered by arcades that provide all-weather pathways and entrances. A separate small chapel was designed to reflect the same design elements of the sanctuary with a folded plate roof. The chapel, built on an octagonal base with pews circling the altar, is meant to hold smaller worship groups of up to 50 people.

Delbert Paulson, the minister at the time of the church's construction, described the unique design of the building as a "functional blend of church values and architecture – both in a state of change". According to him, traditional churches are beautiful structures but have too many limitations whereas "First United is anything but confining". As of 2020, First United Methodist Church is still in use.



Exterior of First Methodist Church



First Methodist Church architectural details



First Methodist Church exterior photos

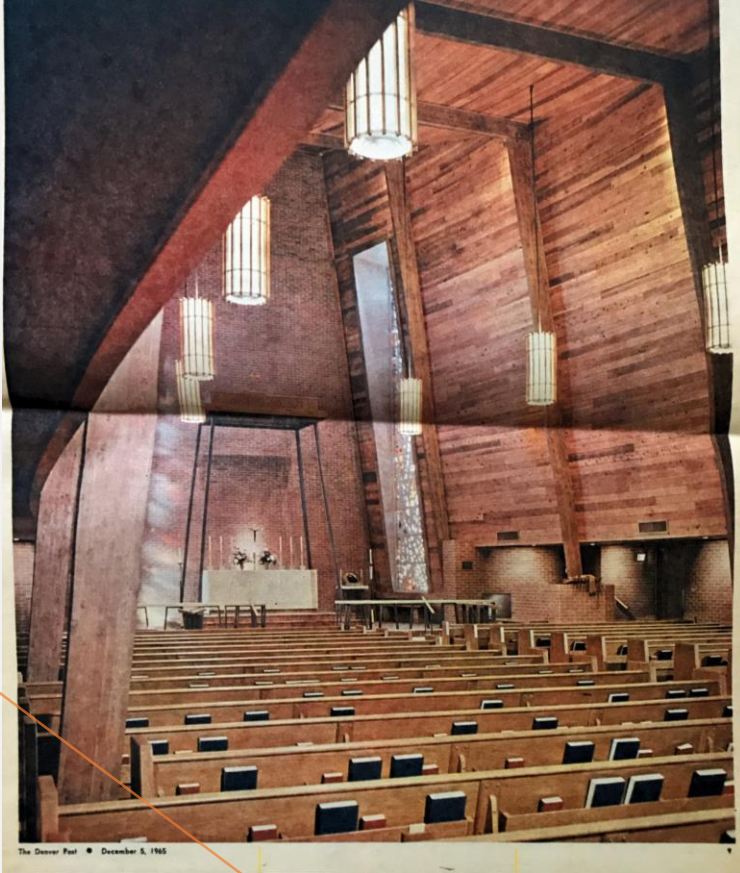
ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Year Completed: 1965

Cost: \$275,175

Contractor: Cook & Mills Contractors (Fort Collins, CO)

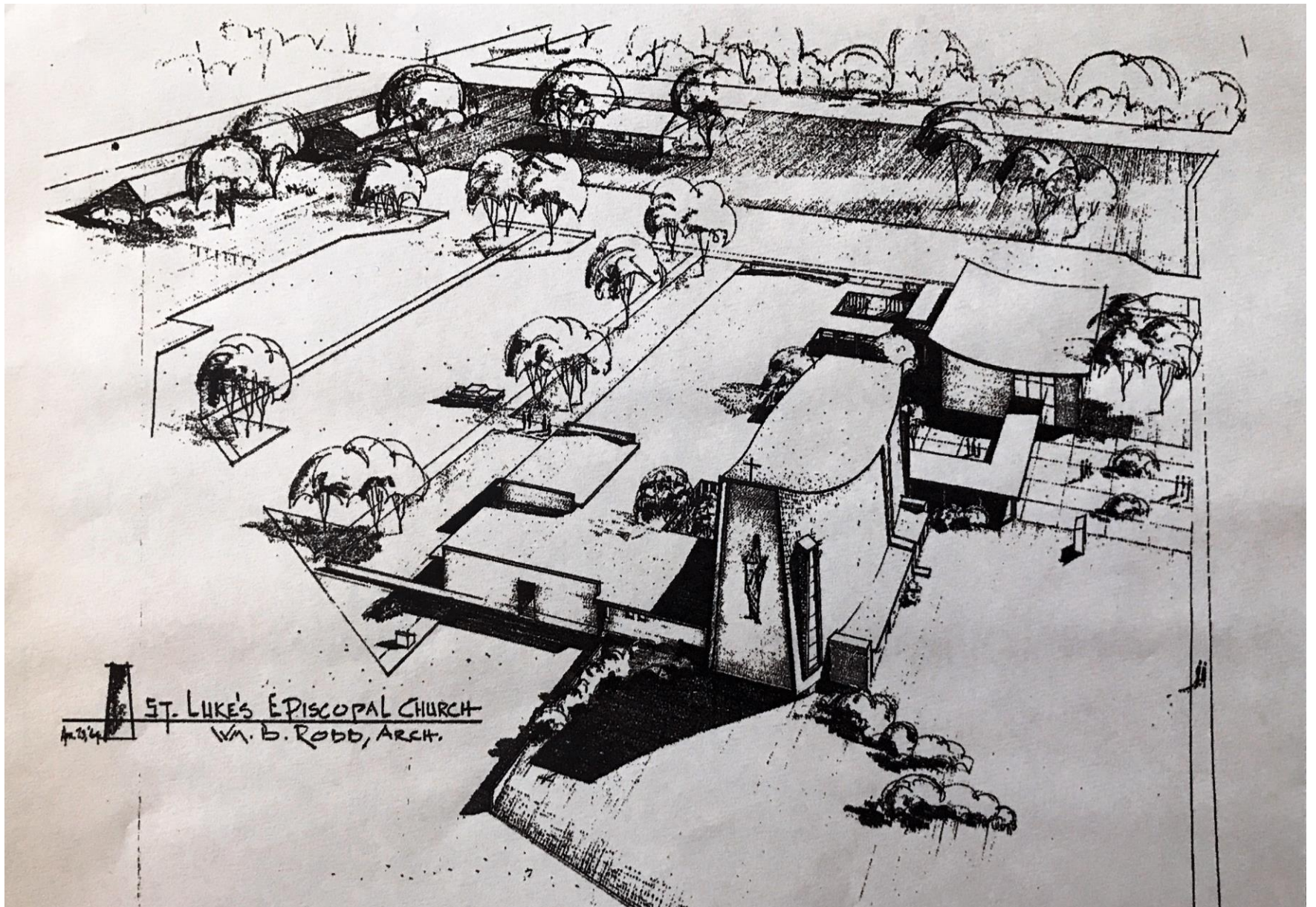
St. Luke's Episcopal Church was described by Dr. Thomas P.F. Hoving, associate director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, as "one of the loveliest examples of contemporary church construction in this country or Europe". Bill Robb's excellent design for St. Luke's was well deserving of that high praise. The building was designed to be reminiscent of an ark but with a contemporary approach. The form emphasizes the nave with roofline sweeping to high points over the two ends of the building. The front end significantly narrows which emphasizes the upward sweep of the roofline while the rear of the nave narrows slightly in order to house the organ and choir. While the shape is very aesthetically pleasing, it was also designed to have the appropriate acoustics. Choosing to place the altar at one end and the baptismal font at the other also helped determine the shape of the building. The emphasis on the nave was very important to the client as a way to show the "importance of Communion and Baptism in the life of its congregation".



Sanctuary of St. Luke's Episcopal Church

ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Even though the design of the building was very contemporary, the basis of the concept was to have a traditional church feel. Robb is quoted as saying, “We designed the chapel so it would have all the furnishings and feelings of the old church. Basically, the church was built with simple materials – brick and wood”. The mix of traditional materials with innovative architecture led to an iconic Fort Collins building. When the Fort Collins Council on the Arts and Humanities created a design committee to judge buildings in the community, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church won the highest award. The representatives from the American Institute of Interior Designers were quoted as saying, “The success of this lovely church stems from the complete coordination of the interior with the architecture and landscape”. A unification of scale, color, material, and simplicity was also noted by the committee. As of 2020, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church is still in use.



Drawing of St. Luke's Episcopal Church



Sanctuary of St. Luke's Episcopal Church (top and bottom)



Exterior of St. Luke's Episcopal Church

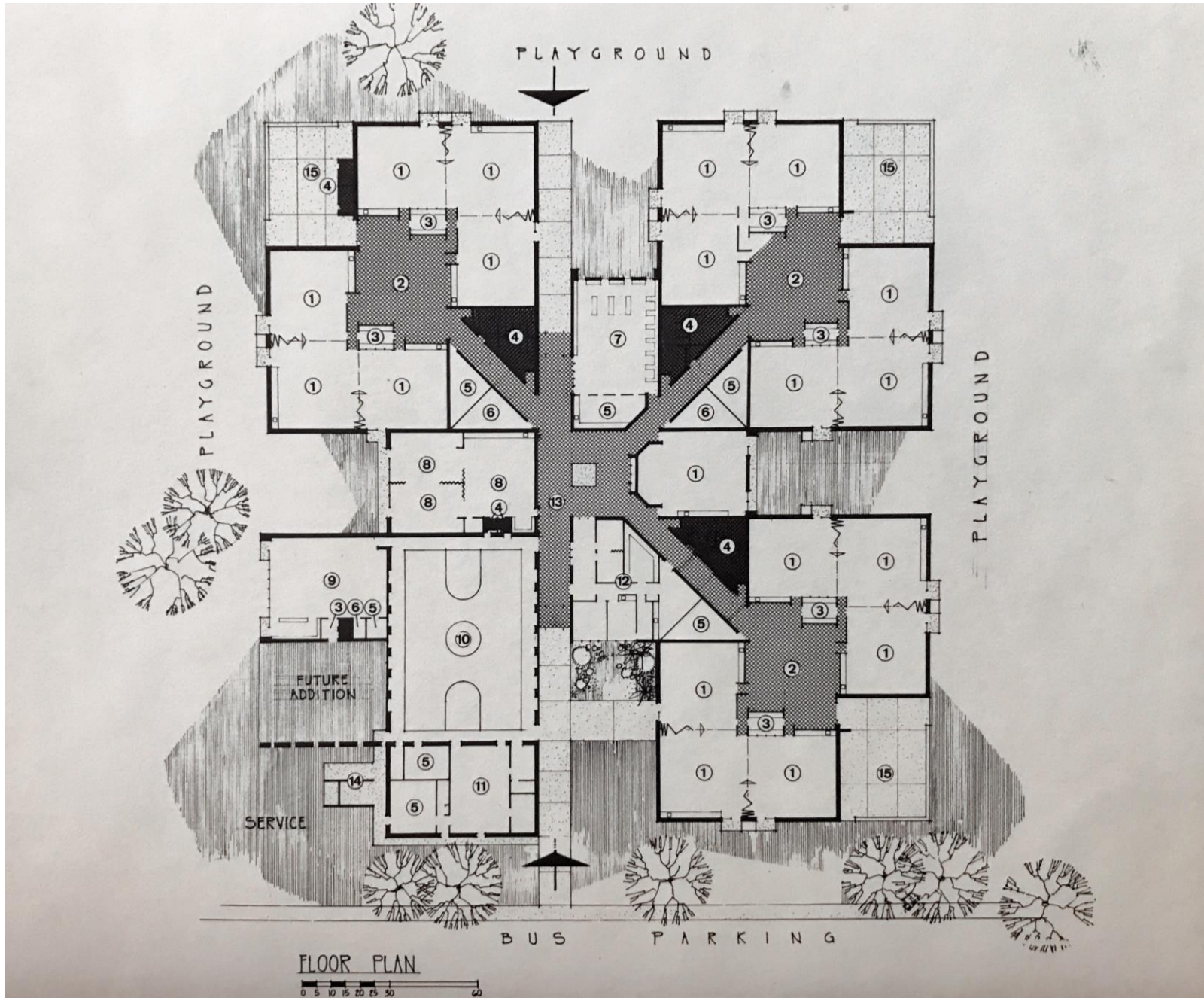
PROTOTYPE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Year Completed: 1968

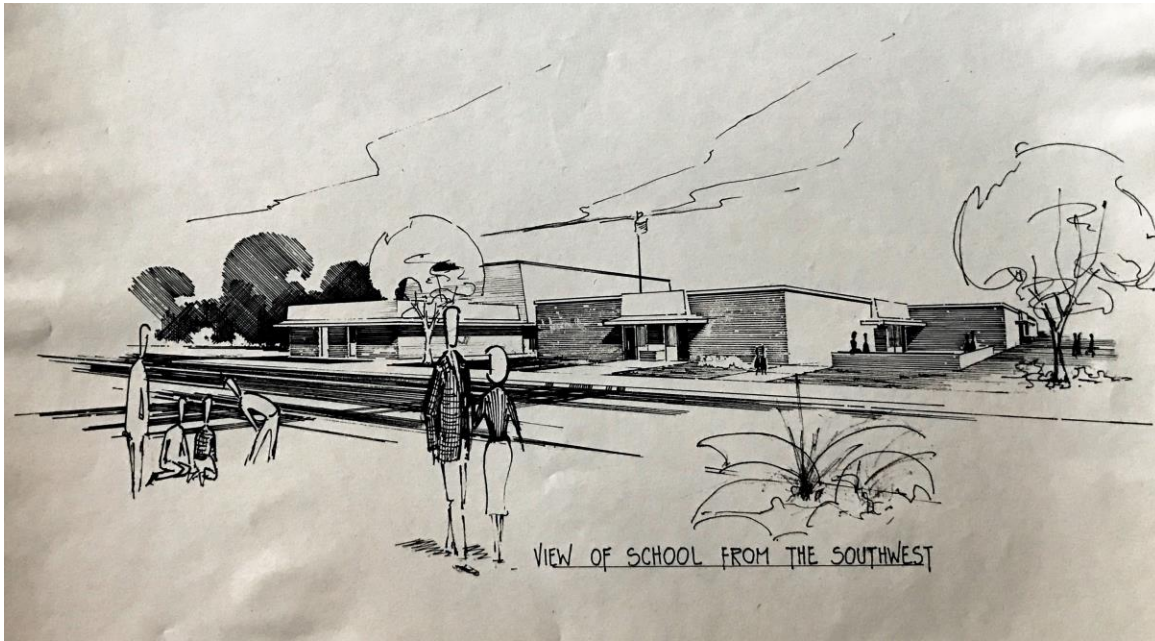
Cost: \$382,444

Contractor: Reid Burton (Fort Collins, CO)

In 1966, Bill Robb received a commission from Poudre School District to design their first prototype elementary schools. For the design of these schools Bill Robb devised the “pod” concept floorplan. The floorplan consists of classrooms surrounding a flexible learning space, which is now a common design used for Fort Collins schools. The schools could have multiple pods connected to the central area in the building depending on how many students they need to accommodate. This first round of prototype schools consisted of four new elementary schools which had identical floorplans. The new schools were Bauder Elementary, Irish Elementary, Riffenburgh Elementary, and Tavelli Elementary. All four of these schools are still being used by Poudre School District, as of 2020.



Floorplan of Riffenburgh Elementary



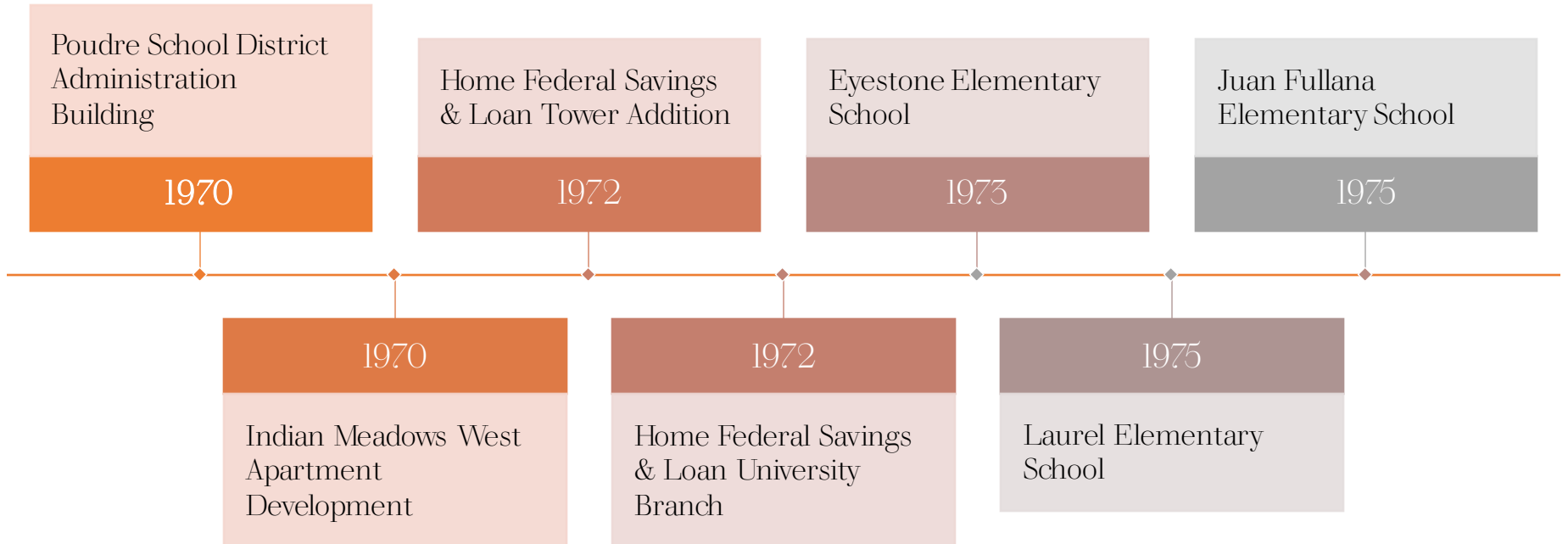
Drawing of
Riffenburgh Elementary
entrance (left)



Aerial photo of
Riffenburgh Elementary (right)

1970 - 1979

The 1970's saw the expansion of William Robb's portfolio of work including large planned developments, prominent buildings, and many more projects for the Poudre School District. One of the biggest changes that occurred during this time period was the firm changing its name. In 1971, Bill Brenner, who joined the firm as an architect in the late 1950's, was made principal and the firm's name was changed to Robb & Brenner, Inc., Architects and Planners.



POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Year Completed: 1970

Cost: \$483,630

Contractor: Livingston Construction (Fort Collins, CO)

As the size of the district expanded, Poudre School District decided that they needed to centralize all their administrative departments into one facility. They chose Bill Robb to design this building due to his stellar history of projects for the district. The building needed to be efficient and economical but most importantly, flexible so it can adapt as the community and district get larger. The site chosen was located between Poudre High School and the district's Maintenance, Warehouse, Transportation Center on land already owned by PSD. Placing the building on their own land it freed up more funds for the project. By locating the new Administrative Building next to the Maintenance, Warehouse, and Transportation Center it would allow for a combined District Central Services Facility. The site chosen also allowed for sufficient expansion possibilities in the future.

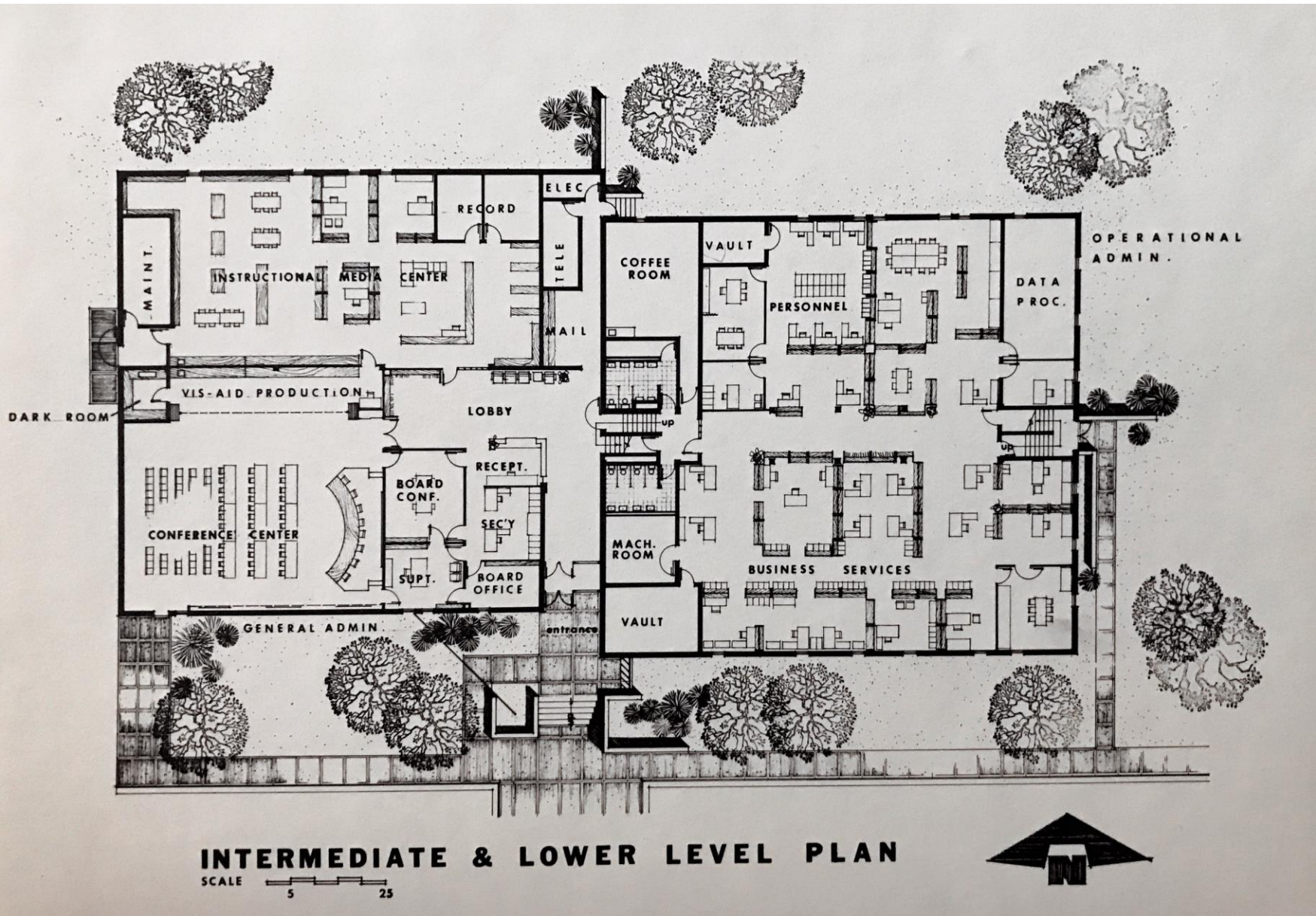
The building was organized into three equal parts. The first part included the instructional media center, conference center, and general administration. Instruction administration made up the second part while the third was operational administration. In order to create efficient communication between each part, Robb designed the building to have a split-level plan. He placed the lobby and the receptionist areas on the intermediate level in order to create a "control center" for the entire building.

POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

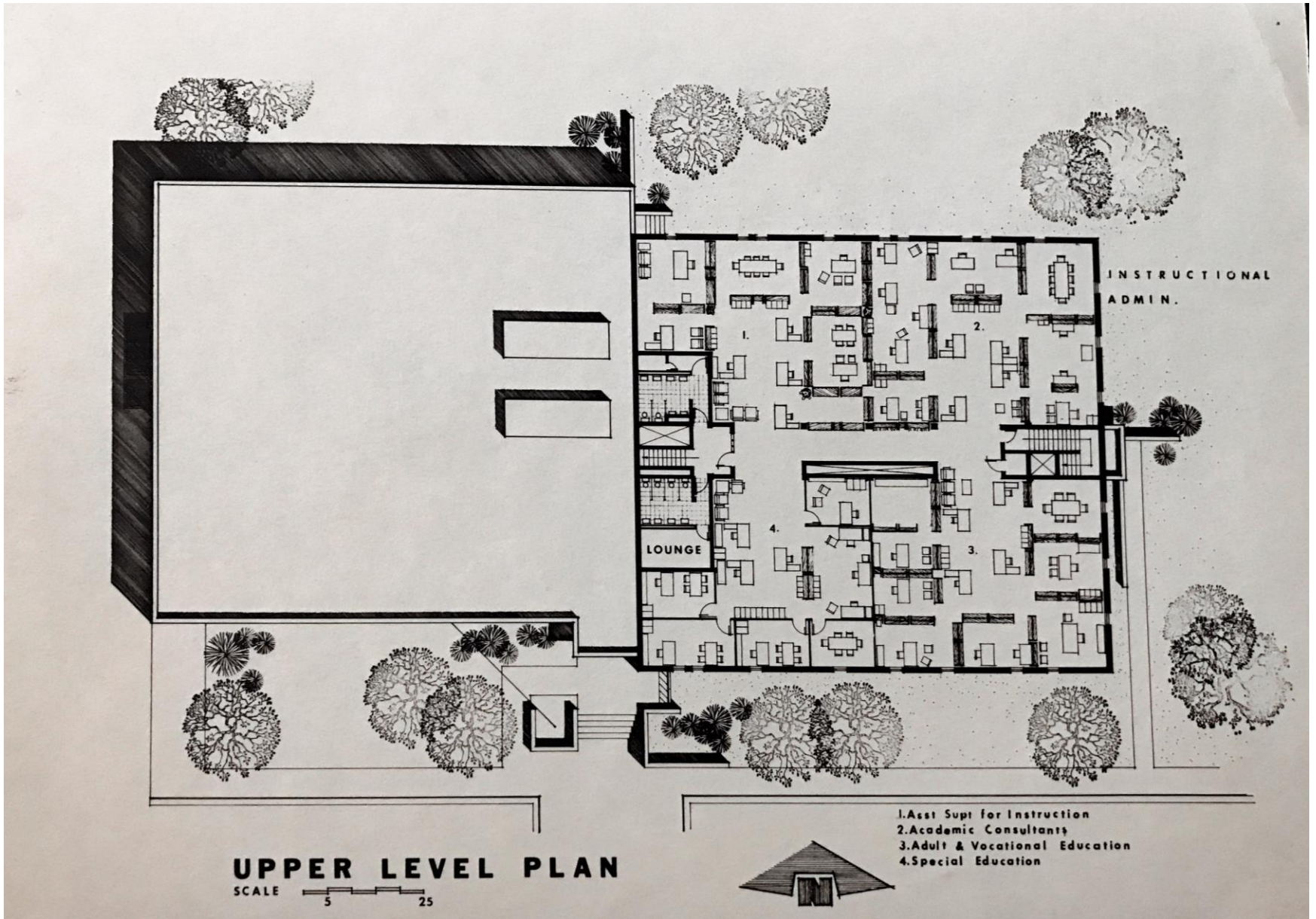
To make this project more economical, Robb chose to use a simple building shape and simple materials. The simple shape of the plan also made it easier to incorporate flexibility throughout the facility. In order to make the building flexible portable dividers were used in many instances instead of walls, which also saved construction costs, and a variety of conference rooms were incorporated into the building in the place of individual offices. These conferences included a main conference center, board conference room, instructional media center, and rooms for business services, personnel, and special education. The portable dividers, along with carpeting and acoustical ceiling, were also used to create a more successful acoustic environment throughout the open floorplan. Air-conditioning and heating units were placed on the roof to free up more building space. The flexibility incorporated into the design meant the facility could expand from the existing 82 employees to 108 employees before an addition would be needed. This building is still being used by Poudre School District, as of 2020.



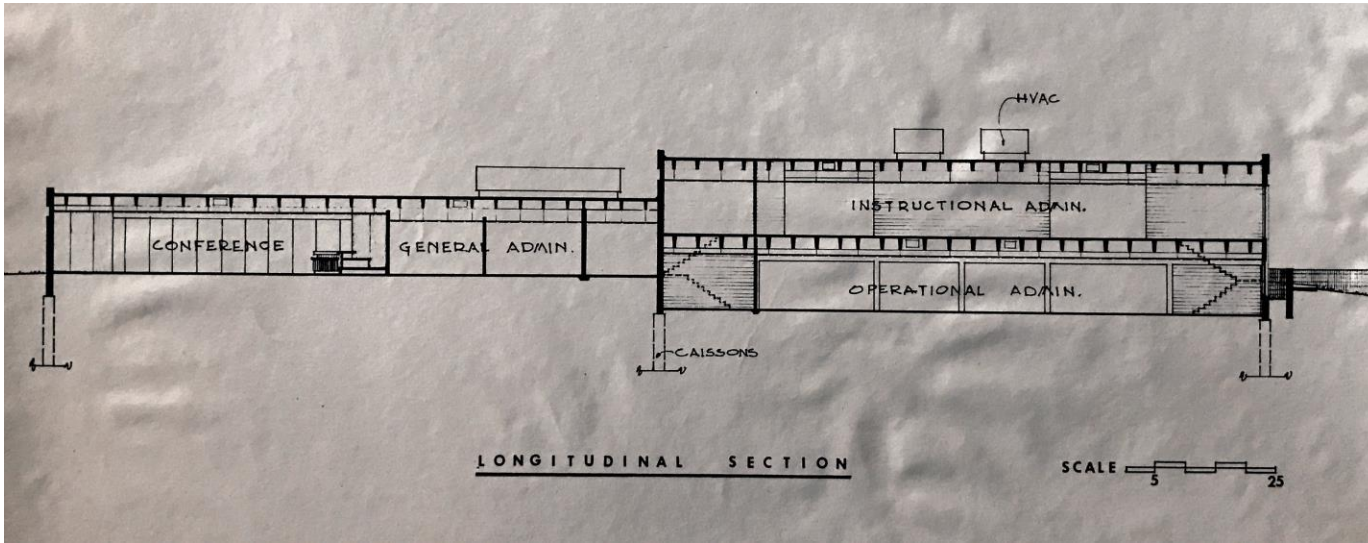
Poudre School District Administration Building photos



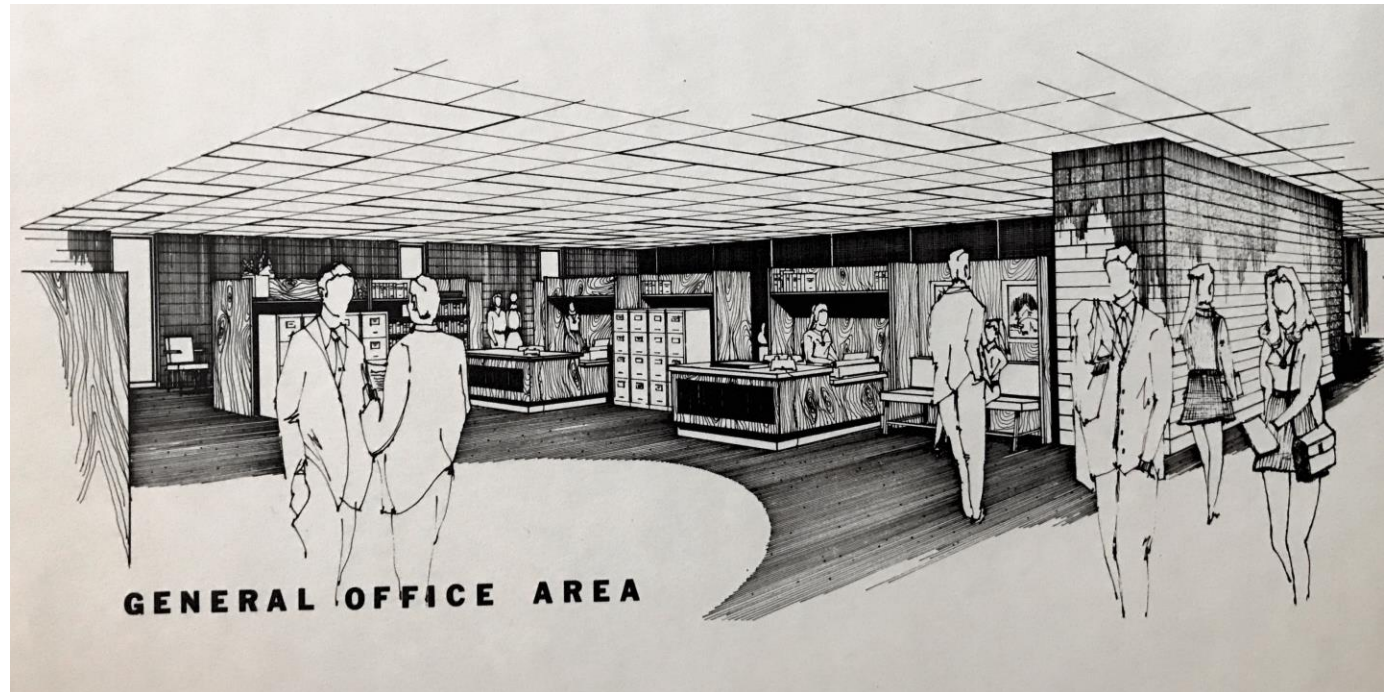
Poudre School District Administration Building Intermediate & Lower-Level Plan



Poudre School District Administration Building Upper-Level Plan



Poudre School District
Administration Building
section drawing (left)



Drawing of Poudre School District
Administration Building office area
(right)



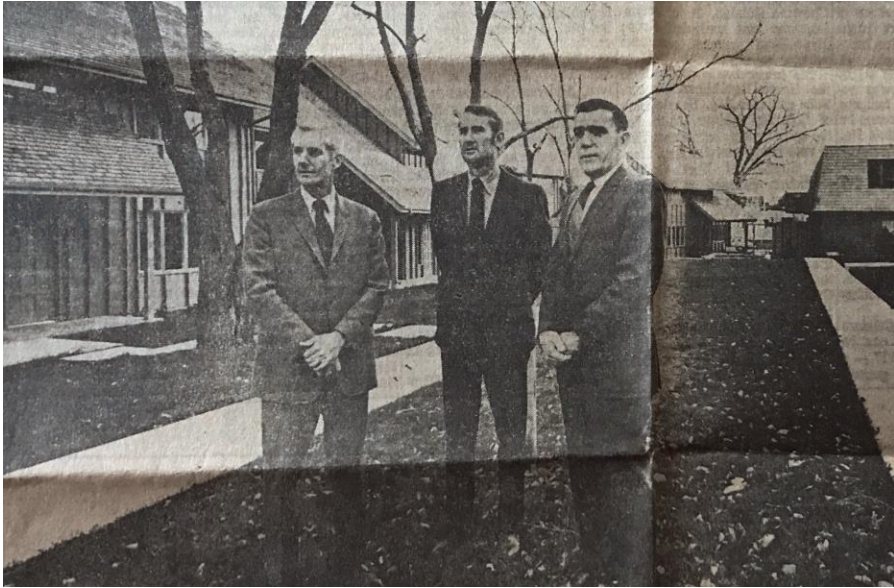
Interior photos of Poudre School District Administration Building

INDIAN MEADOWS WEST APARTMENT DEVELOPMENT

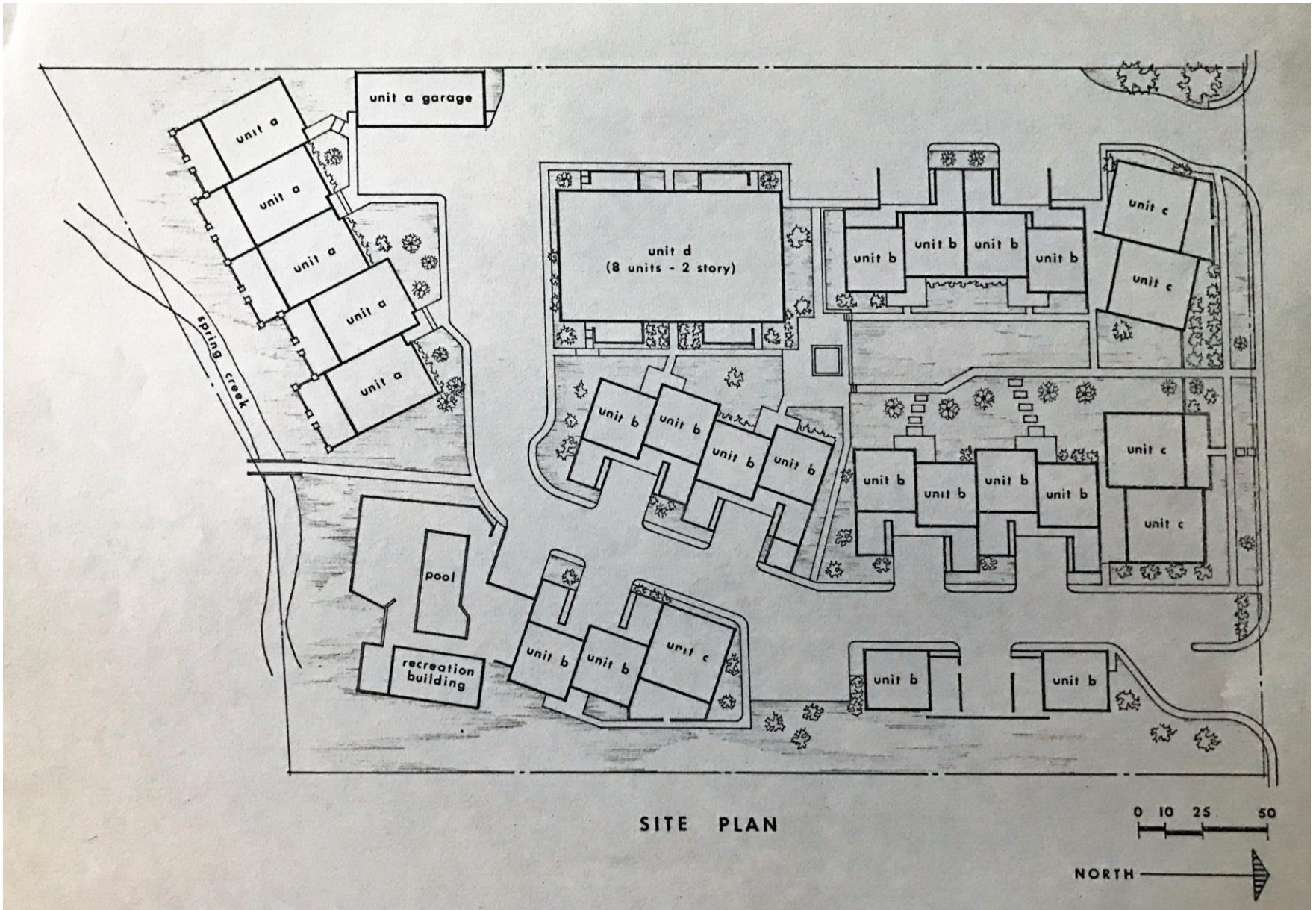
Year Completed: 1970

The Indian Meadows West Apartment Development is Bill Robb's most well-known planned unit development. It was the first of its kind in Fort Collins. The underlying goal of this project was to make it as economical as possible, with at least 12 units per acre. Along with that goal, Bill Robb wanted to make sure the existing environment was taken into consideration during the design process. He made sure to save as many existing trees as possible and design each unit to have views of green areas. The positioning of the buildings allowed for outdoor spaces of varying sizes throughout the complex.

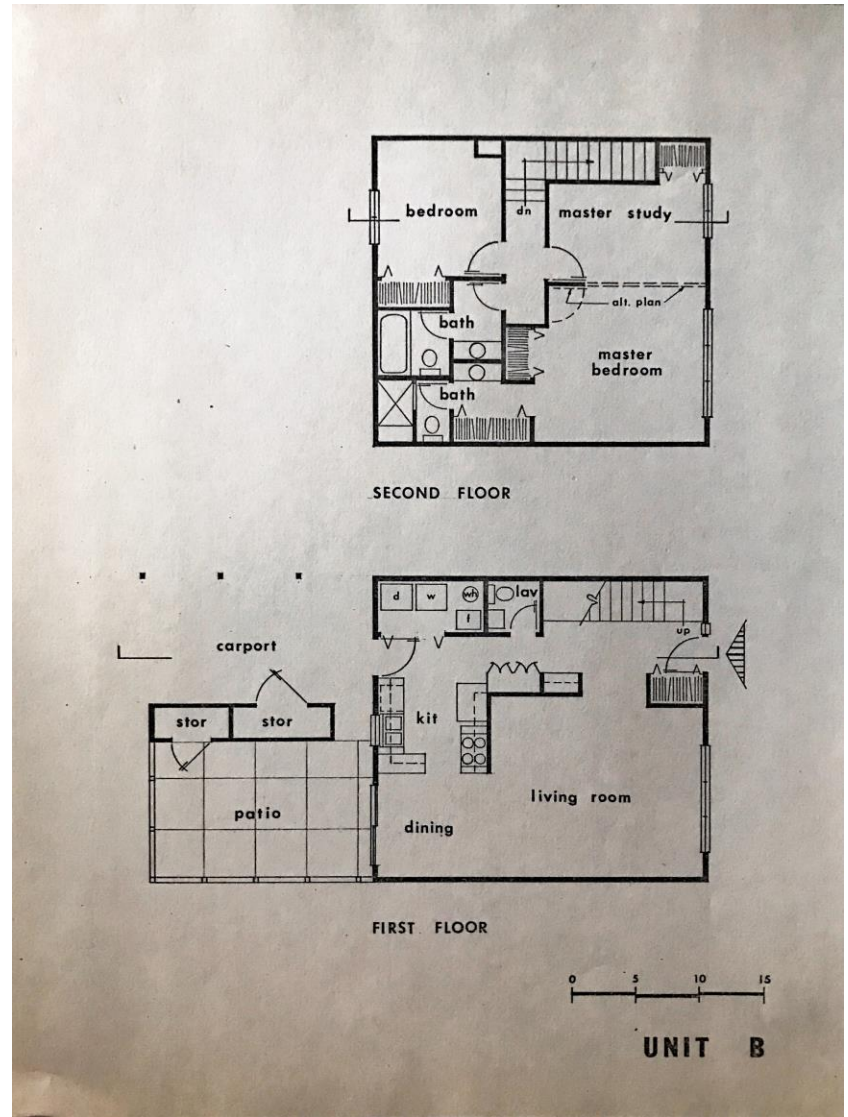
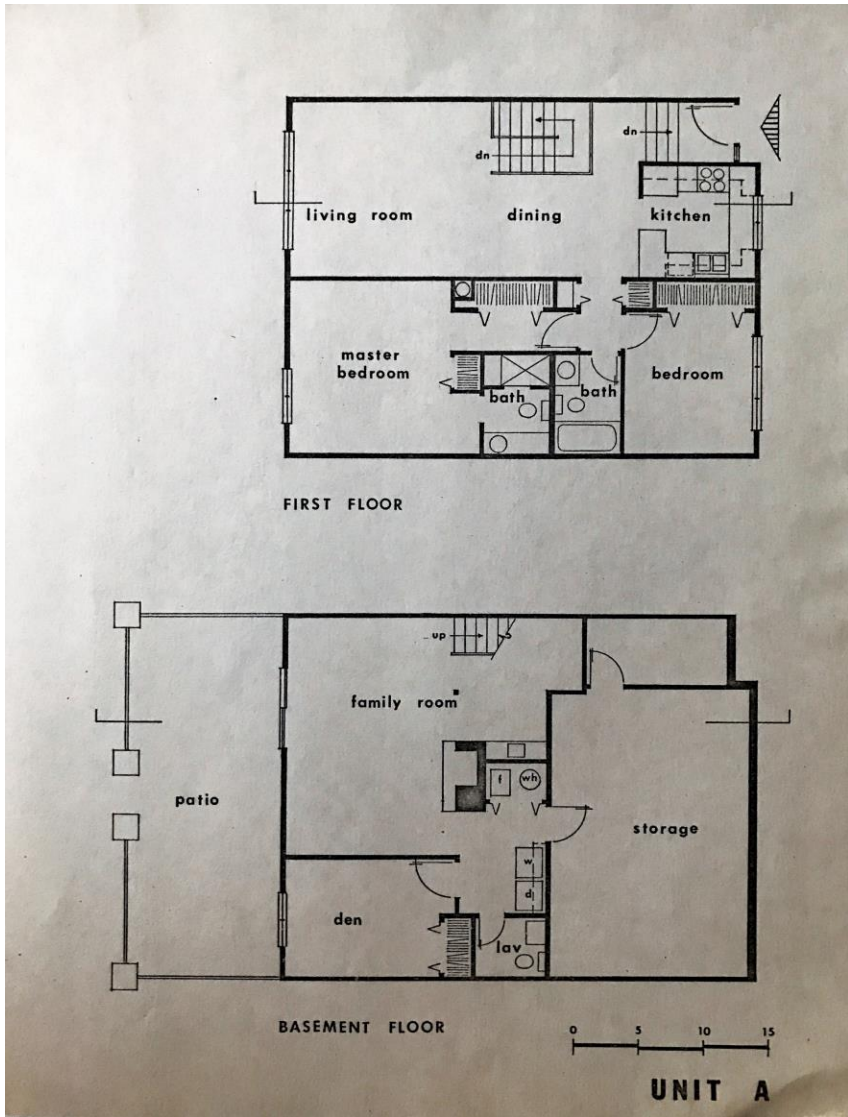
Once the project was completed it had exceeded the original goal of 12 units per acre by having 34 units for the 2.67 development. The complex was made up of 5 garden luxury units, 16 townhouses, 5 bungalows, and 8 apartments, with each unit having a private fenced patio. The shake roofs and green-toned cedar siding used on the buildings was chosen to create an informal, rustic atmosphere. Bill Robb's use of wood in this project resulted in the firm receiving the W.O.O.D. Citation for Excellence award, which is presented annually by the Wood Products Manufacturer's Association. Indian Meadows won this award out of 50 projects that were submitted to the statewide contest. The award was received for building the best multi-dwelling development made of wood in Colorado. W.O.O.D. Inc. especially admired the "esthetic and creative way [Robb] combined lumber and wood products in this imaginative development". The Indian Meadows West Development is still in use, as of 2020.



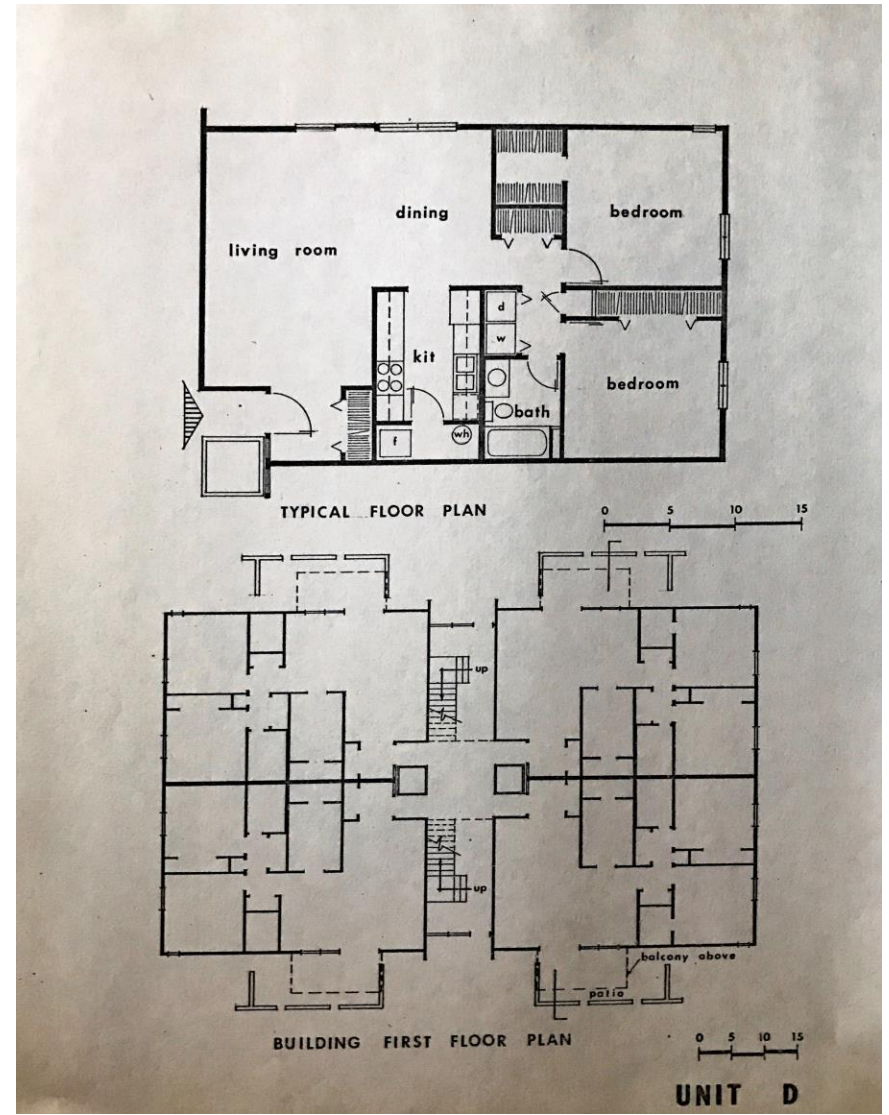
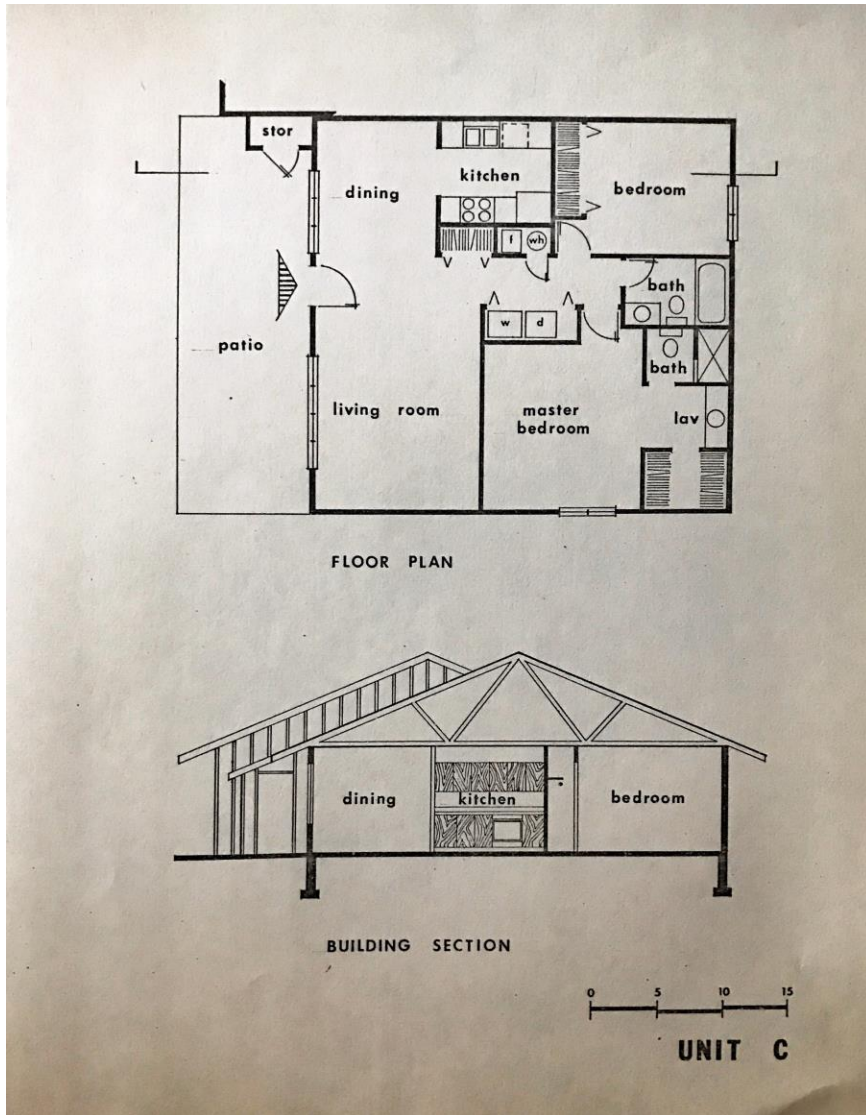
Indian Meadows West Apartment buildings (top and right)
William Robb, on the right, and project developers on site (bottom left)



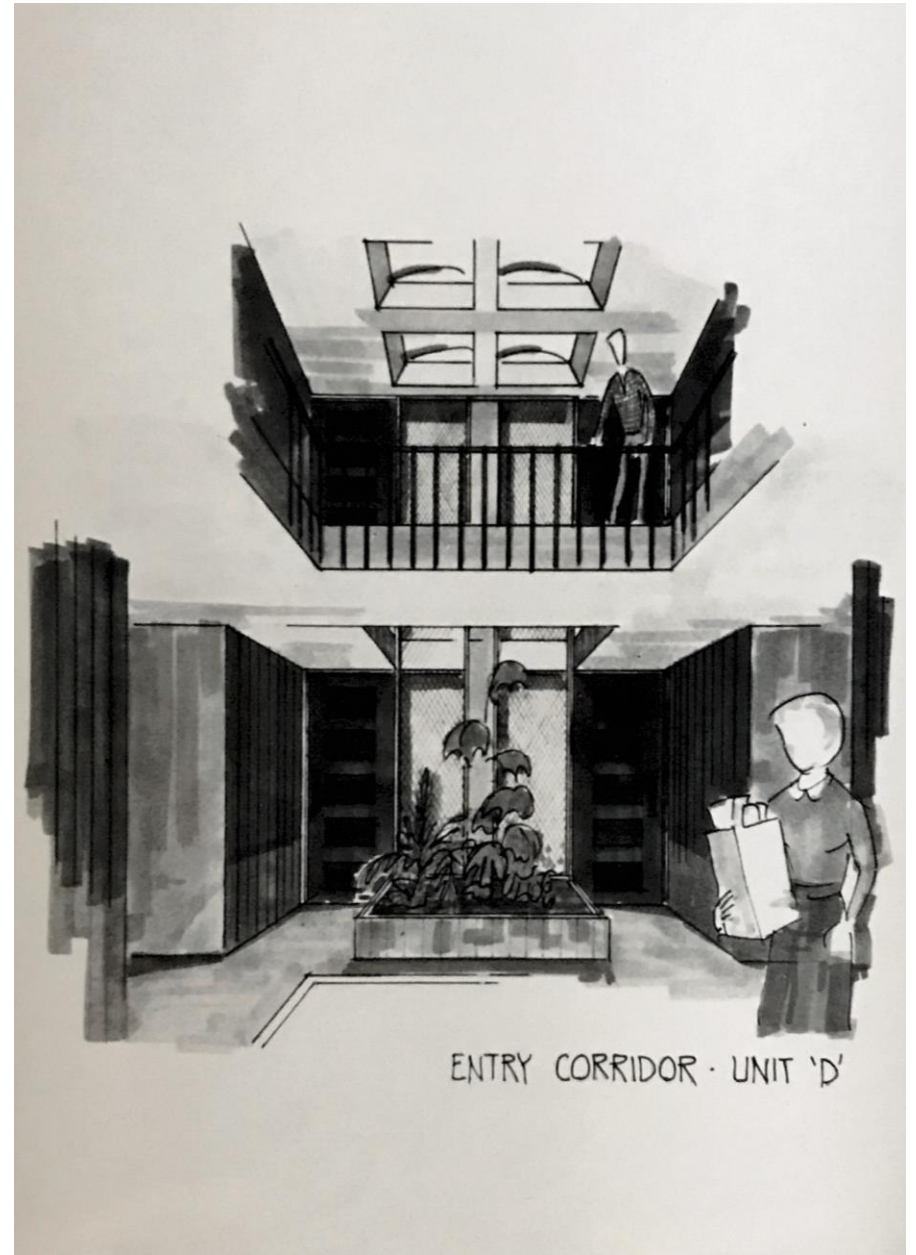
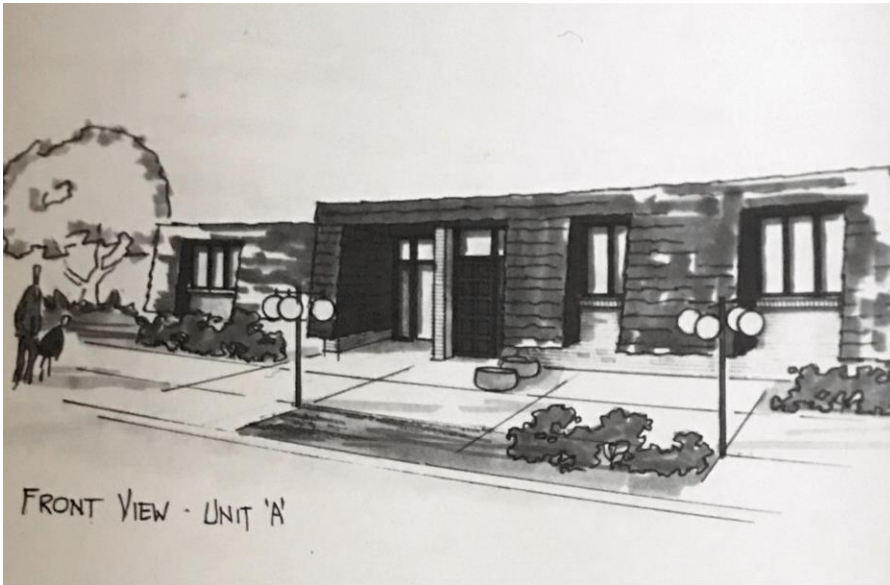
Indian Meadows West site plan



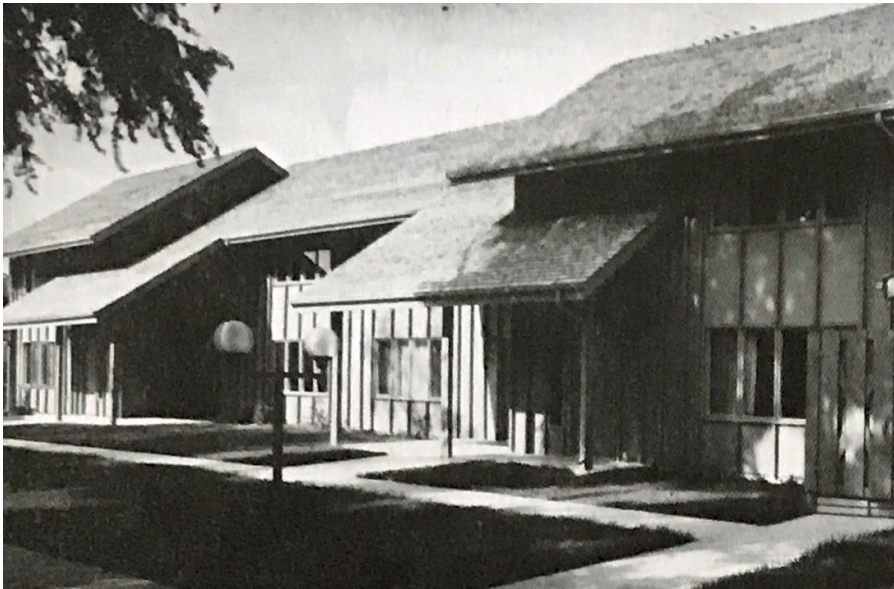
Indian Meadows West apartment floorplans by unit



Indian Meadows West apartment floorplans by unit



Drawings of Indian Meadows West Apartment Development



Indian Meadows West Apartment Development photos



HOME FEDERAL SAVINGS & LOAN TOWER ADDITION

Year Completed: 1972

Cost: \$2,372,640

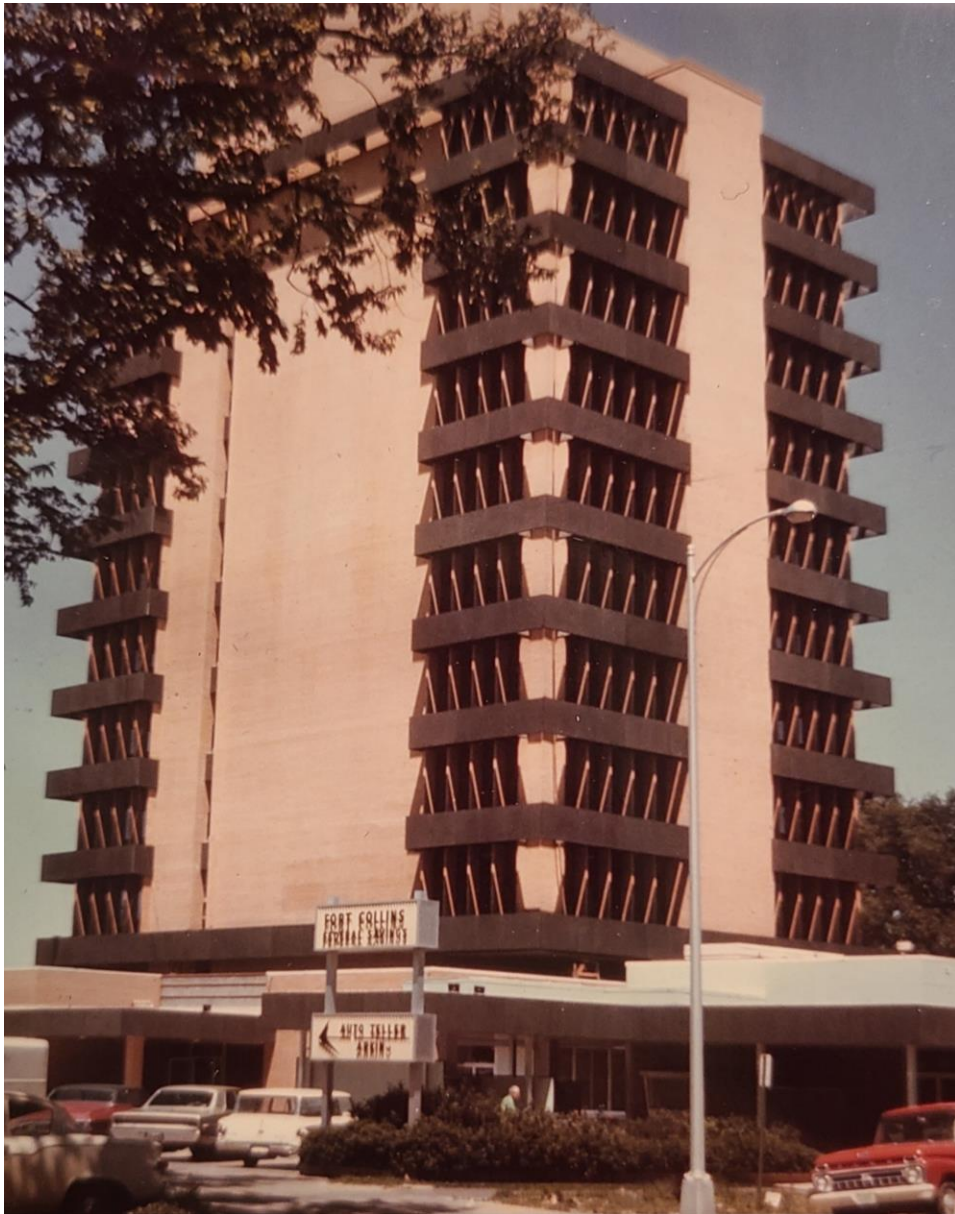
Contractor: N.C. Petry Construction Company (Denver, CO)

When Bill Robb was commissioned to design the new Home Federal Savings and Loan Tower addition it was a complex challenge. The client, Federal Savings and Loan Association, needed an addition to the existing building that would provide “high quality office space convenient to [the] Fort Collins government and financial core”. When Federal Savings and Loan Association originally opened in Fort Collins they were responsible for assets of \$8 million but by the time of construction, they had assets of over \$36 million which meant they needed a large expansion of space. They also decided to incorporate office rental space, in addition to the banking facilities.

HOME FEDERAL SAVINGS & LOAN TOWER ADDITION

Based on these client requirements, Bill Robb designed an 11-story addition which would be cantilevered from a central load over the existing one-story building. Each floor had 4,234 sq. ft. of rentable space. It was important that the new addition had unifying factors with the existing building. To achieve this effect, Robb decided to carry the buff roman brick exterior from the existing building onto the exterior of the addition. New masonry pavers were incorporated onto the steps and along path borders to emphasize the entrances, both old and new. To minimize any solar heat gain all the glassed areas on the tower were set between two-foot-deep masonry fins. Black precast concrete solar shades placed over large window areas were also used for solar control and the strong black horizontal lines tied into similar design details on the existing building. The new masonry fins were also extended onto the south elevation of the existing building.

Once the building was completed it was the tallest building in Fort Collins and stood as a symbol of strength in the community. Within a year of completion, all 62,000 sq. ft. of office space was fully leased, which included Robb & Brenner Inc., who moved their offices onto the 10th floor of the building. The leasing of the entire building was completed three years ahead of projections. While the tower is no longer the home of William Robb's architecture firm, it is still in use today, as of 2020.



Home Federal Savings & Loan Tower (left and bottom right)





Home Federal Savings & Loan Tower interior photos

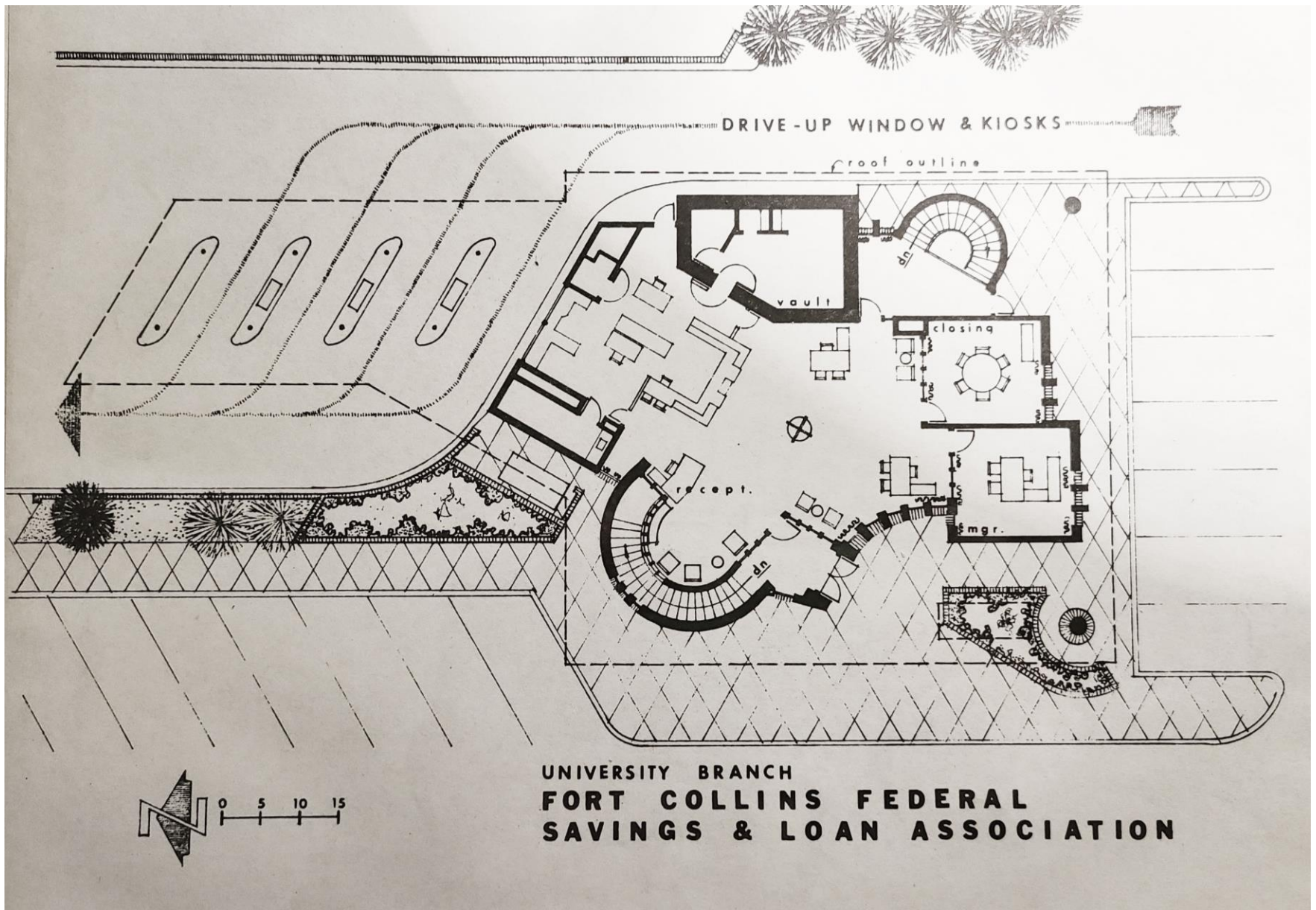
HOME FEDERAL SAVINGS & LOAN UNIVERSITY BRANCH

Year Completed: 1972

Cost: \$263,256

Contractor: N.C. Petry Construction Company (Denver, CO)

Bill Robb was also commissioned to design a University Branch for the Federal Savings and Loan Association, in conjunction with the Tower addition. The University Branch building was designed using the same materials and colors as the Tower in order to create a recognizable tie to the downtown facility. Perforated brick screens, strong horizontal lines, and planters were incorporated in the design so the building could visually transition between the adjacent residential neighborhood and commercial areas across the street. Inside the building the customer service area is angled to work efficiently with the drive-through area, which is a main feature of this project. The projecting circular stair enclosures were designed to admit daylight into the stairway and reception areas throughout the building. This Home Federal Savings and Loan Branch is no longer in use.



Home Federal Savings & Loan University Branch plan



Home Federal Savings & Loan University Branch photos

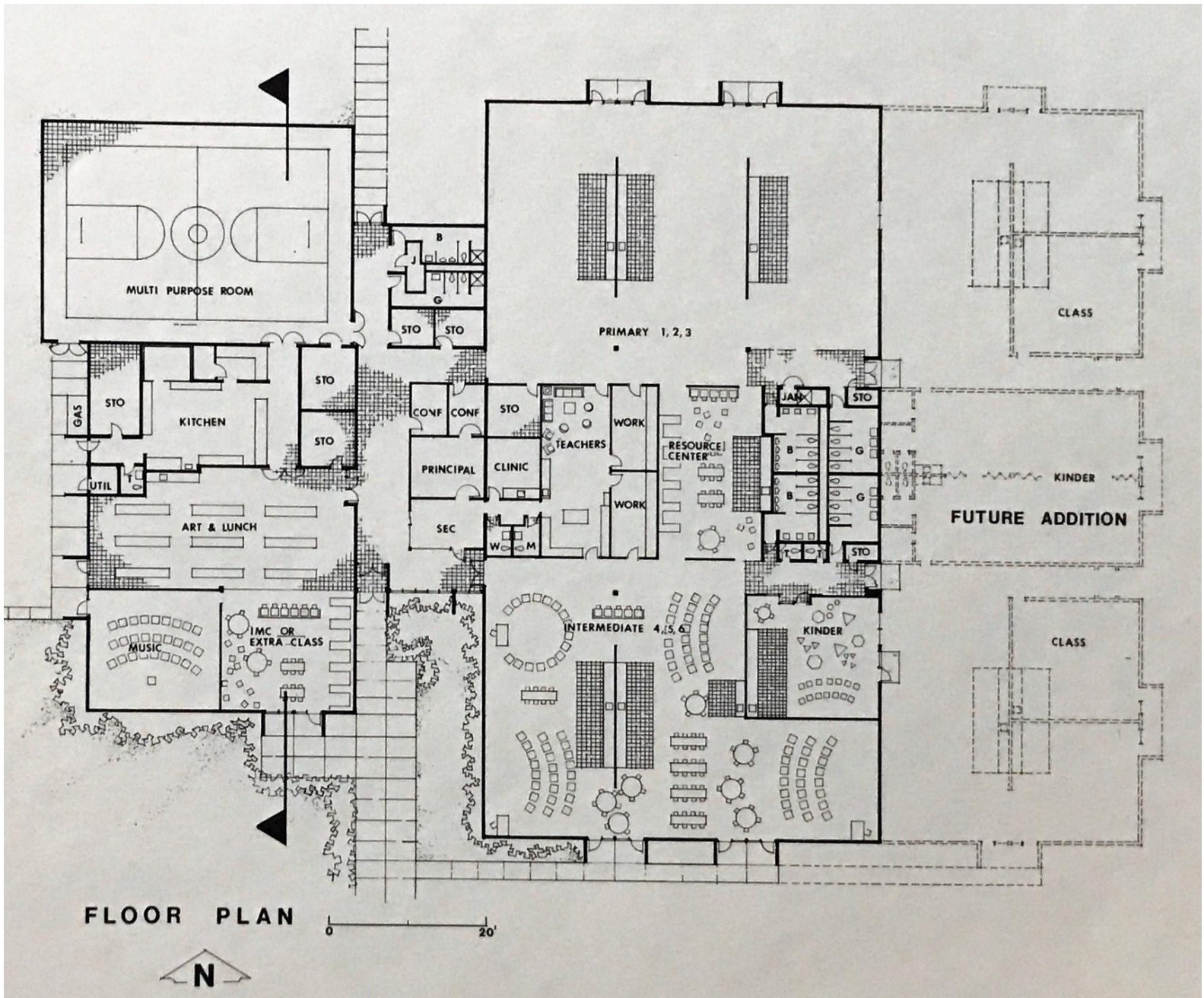
EYESTONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Year Completed: 1973

Cost: \$474,056

Contractor: G.E. Johnson (Colorado Springs, CO)



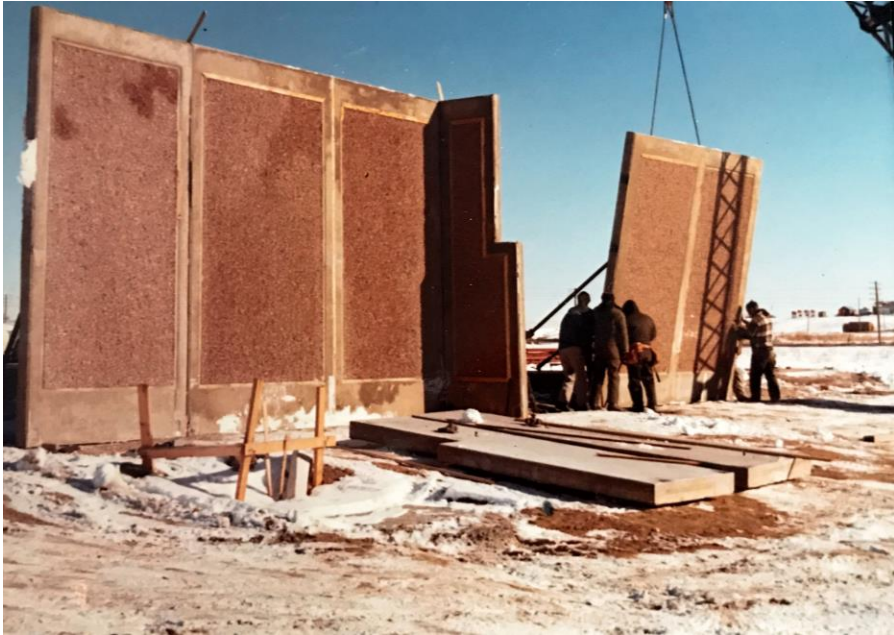


FLOOR PLAN



0 20'

Eyestone
Elementary
floorplan



Construction photos of Eyestone Elementary

LAUREL & JUAN FULLANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Laurel Elementary School

Year Completed: 1975

Cost: \$667,280

Contractor: Reid Burton (Fort Collins, CO)

Juan Fullana Elementary School

Year Completed: 1975

Cost: \$662,280

Contractor: Reid Burton (Fort Collins, CO)

“At first glance Laurel Elementary School looks conventional; a new, one-story structure bright with new paint and similar to thousands of other schools designed in the last few decades. But like a giant set of tinker toys, except for a central core, the building at 1000 E. Locust St. can be taken apart, loaded up on flatbed trucks and carted away to a new site.” After decades of working with Poudre School District, Bill Robb was commissioned with a project that required an innovative solution. The district needed replacements for two elementary schools in the central area of Fort Collins. The problem was that the population in those areas was declining and it was unclear if that trend would continue or reverse in the future. To combat this problem an adaptable school design was needed.

LAUREL & JUAN FULLANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

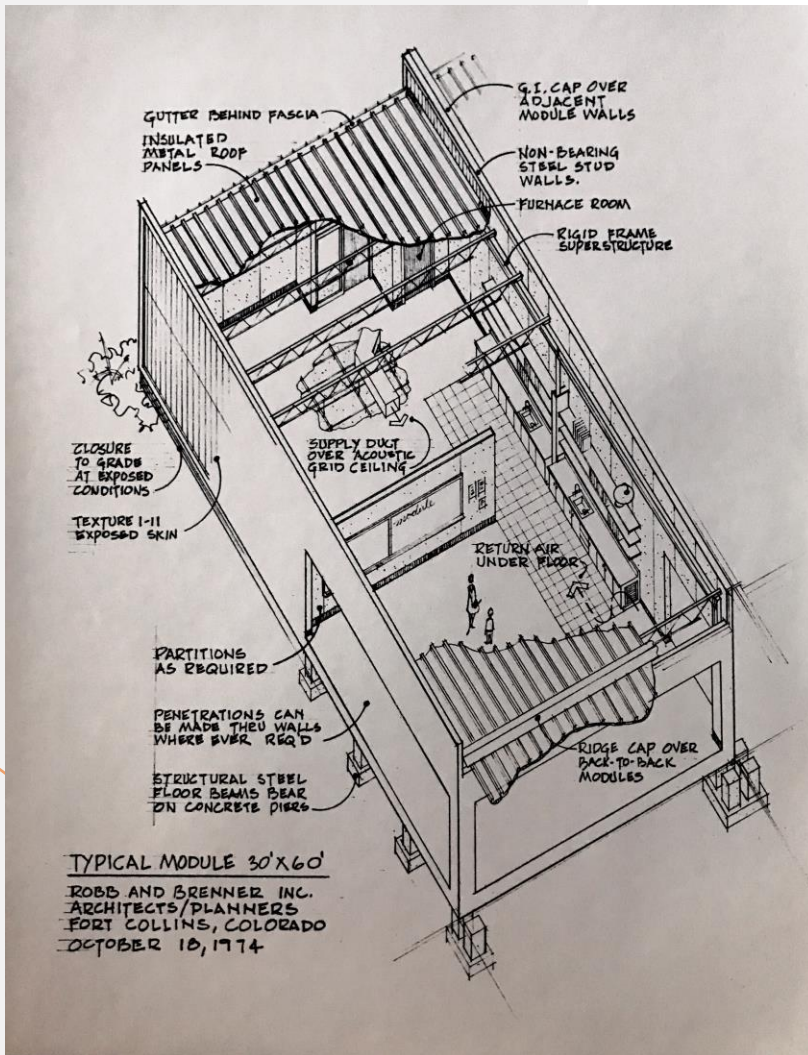
Bill Robb produced a design that involved classroom modules that attach to a permanent central core building. The permanent core would house a gymnasium, restrooms, and cafeteria, which could be used as community spaces if the school is no longer needed. Each module was the size of two classrooms, 30' by 60', and was designed to be placed on a reinforced concrete slab foundation. All the modules are self-contained with their own mechanical system, which makes them easy to relocate. They fasten to the permanent core with bolts that can easily be removed. With this design option, the schools would be able to relocate modules if the school population declines or add more modules if the population increases. Robb's philosophy behind the concept was to bring the school to the kids instead of asking the kids to move for the school.

Laurel Elementary was built to replace the original Laurel School, built in 1906, and could accommodate up to 330 students. Juan Fullana Elementary replaced LaPorte Avenue School, built in 1907, and had the capacity for 270 students. Both designs featured the innovative new modules. Don L. Webber, the District Superintendent at the time, was quoted saying, "We are very proud of the creative design of this new school. The flexibility of the interior design meets the needs of the education program and the moveable modules will make the building adaptable to the uncertainties of enrollment over the next few years".

LAUREL & JUAN FULLANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

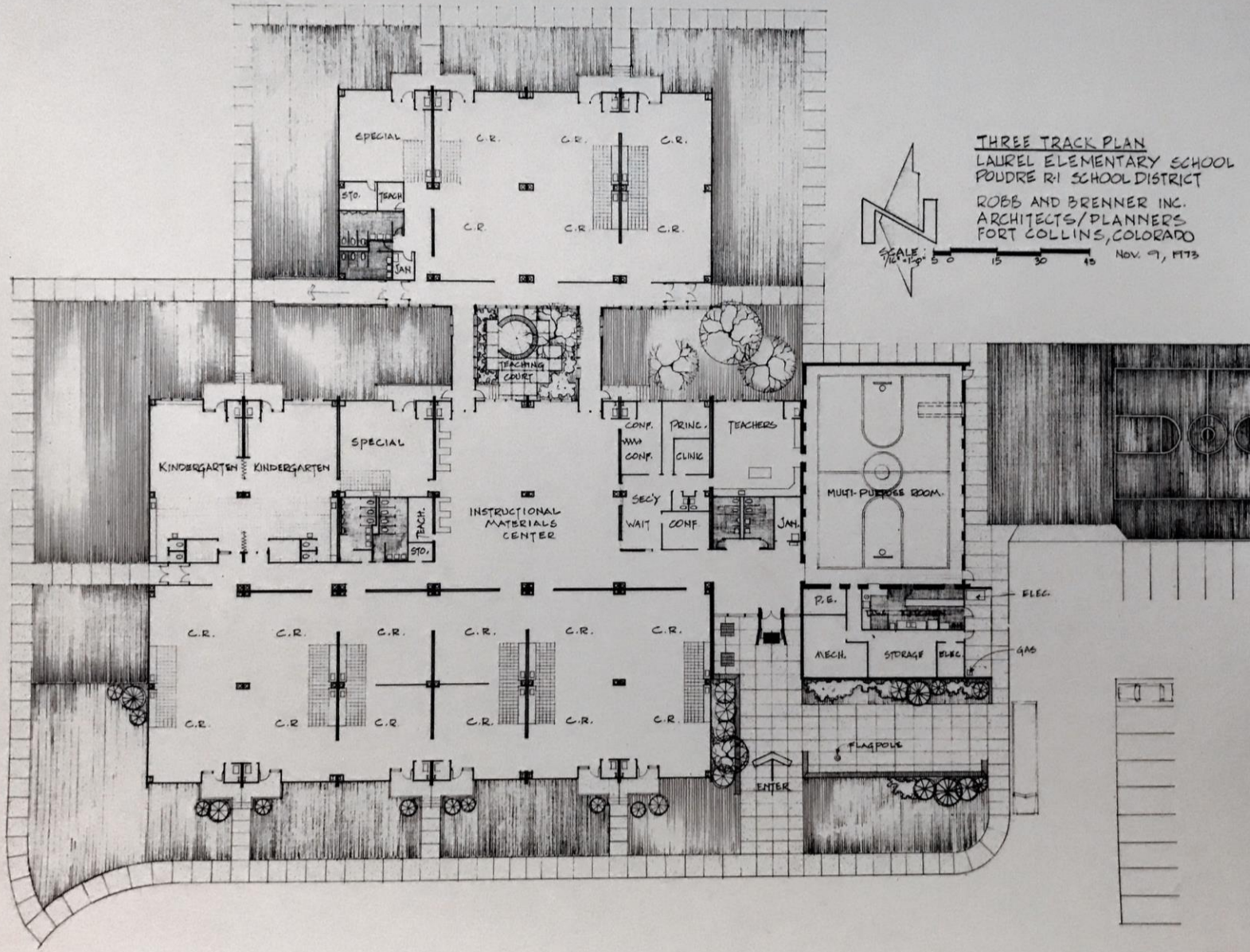
The design for these schools was selected to be exhibited at the national convention of the American Association of School Administrators in Dallas, Texas. The innovative designs for Laurel Elementary and Juan Fullana Elementary both received a National Design Award from the Armco Steel Corporation. The awards were for an excellent use of metal in the design and construction of the buildings. Laurel Elementary also received the annual Metal Building of the Year Award from the Metal Building Dealers Association in 1975.

As of 2020, both schools are still in use by the Poudre School District. Laurel Elementary is still used as an elementary school and Juan Fullana Elementary has transitioned to the Fullana Learning Center, an early childhood education program. The modules designed by Bill Robb have helped both schools adapt to changing school populations and functions over the years.



Schematic drawing of the moveable units

GRAVELED
PLAYGROUNDS

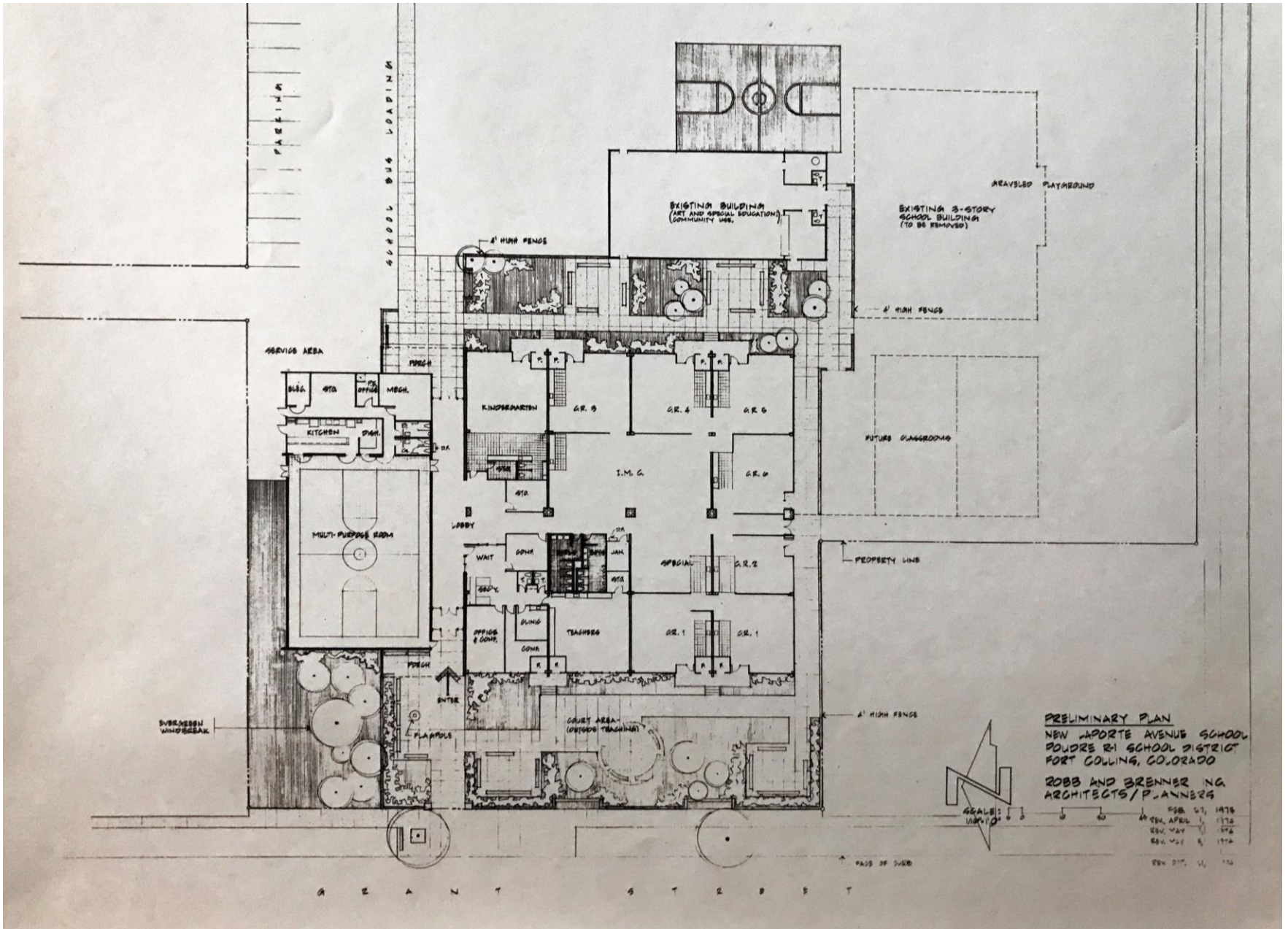


THREE TRACK PLAN
LAUREL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
POUDRE R1 SCHOOL DISTRICT
ROBB AND BRENNER INC.
ARCHITECTS/PLANNERS
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0" 5 0 15 30 45 Nov. 9, 1973

GRAVELED
PLAYGROUNDS

Laurel Elementary floorplan



Juan Fullana school floorplan

1980 - 1989

The 1980's brought about big changes to the firm of Robb & Brenner, Inc., Architects and Planners. George Breilig, an architect who joined the firm in 1979, was promoted to principal in 1986. After this promotion, the name of the firm changed to Robb Brenner & Breilig Architects, Inc. The name was later shortened to RB+B Architects, which is what the firm is still known by. Also, in 1986, William Robb officially retired from the firm after a prolific, 35-year career. When he retired, Bill Robb had worked on at least 33 public schools, 15 commercial buildings, 16 churches, 6 research and university buildings, 7 fraternity houses, and 15 developments and housing projects. Even though he no longer had an official role at the firm, Bill continued to consult on projects for many years. The firm continued to expand their portfolio of work during this decade and expanded their site design and land planning for developments services.



SCOTCH PINES VILLAGE SHOPS & APARTMENTS

Year Completed: 1980

Cost: \$4,000,000

Contractor: Reid Burton Construction (Fort Collins, CO)



Scotch Pines Village tower (top)

Scotch Pines Village illustration (below)



The Scotch Pines Village Shopping Center was one of the first major retail and office complex in Fort Collins. It was developed before Old Town Square, the most well-known Fort Collins retail complex. The design of the complex was built around a neighborhood supermarket. The 10.8-acre development included 85,000 sq. ft. of retail space and 10,000 sq. ft. of office space which could have up to 25 retail shops and 10 offices. Bill Robb chose to focus the design aspects of the development around the context of a “village”. To achieve this effect, sloping roof lines, covered walkways, plazas, and the use of natural materials were incorporated throughout the complex. Landscaped berms that extended from the ends of the office buildings were used to soften the setting even more. Most shopping center parking lots have a problem with glare, so the site lighting was designed to eliminate that issue and give the complex a more inviting feel. Even small details were considered, like the signage which were required to be made of wood, in creating a “village” look. A large clock tower was added to the design to create a focal point for the shopping complex.

SCOTCH PINES VILLAGE SHOPS & APARTMENTS

The project was able to have 70% of the office and retail space committed to tenants before the construction was completed. When the complex officially opened it included a supermarket, savings and loan, veterinary clinic, travel agency, dentist, 24-hour banking facilities, real estate office, insurance and investment offices, and food, clothing, and personal services businesses. Scotch Pines was considered such a success after opening that it became the city's model example for their Land Use Guidance System, composed of high-end residential, industry, retail and office space.

The adjacent Scotch Pines Apartments were also designed by Bill Robb as part of the overall planned development. Low gable roof lines and the use of brick and wood materials were used in the design of the apartment buildings so that they relate visually to the shopping center. The apartment complex is a mix of patio homes, townhouses, and duplexes alongside the apartments. All the units in the complex open onto green space, which makes up 65% of the site. A community building, pools, and tennis courts were also incorporated into the complex for resident use.

Both the Scotch Pines Apartments and Shopping Center are still in use in 2020. Even though the businesses in the shopping center have changed throughout the years, the look of the complex has changed very little since it's construction.

RB+B ARCHITECTS AFTER WILLIAM ROBB

Bill Robb officially retired on August 9, 1986, on his 65th birthday, but even after he left RB+B Architects his approach to architecture and work philosophy stayed a central part of the company. Many of the client relationships he had cultivated over the decades are still holding strong, especially the partnership with Poudre School District. As of 2020, RB+B Architects has designed or worked on 33 of the 46 schools in the district. Bill Robb and his firm designed schools that all six of his children attended, most of his grandchildren attended, and even a few of his children worked in as teachers. RB+B is also currently working on a new round of schools being built in Fort Collins, including an elementary school, middle school, and a high school complex. Starting in the 2000's, all the schools the firm designed have become national examples of sustainable architecture in the education field.

Sustainability has become a cornerstone of the RB+B brand, which started with Bill Robb's design philosophy. In a 1971 article for the Larimer County Guardian, he talked about his hope that as Fort Collins grew, natural and open spaces would be preserved. He always considered how a project would relate to the site location and environment, which would determine the look and design of the building. From the beginning of the firm, he embraced innovative and forward-thinking ideas, many of which are now commonly used sustainable design elements. Some of these elements included bringing natural light into a building, using low maintenance materials, and trying to keep as many existing plants and trees as possible. A lot of sustainable design is about creating healthy environments for the users of the building, which was always a key part of Bill Robb's architectural philosophy.

RB+B ARCHITECTS AFTER WILLIAM ROBB

Robb was always an advocate of a healthy work-life balance which is still evident in the company today. Even at his busiest, Bill would always make it a point to come home every day for lunch with his wife, according to his daughter Pamela. This appreciation for the people in his life was incorporated into the way he ran his firm as well. He started a tradition at the company that every Friday afternoon the whole firm would take a break from work so the employees could hang out and catch up with each other on a personal level. The Friday afternoon break is a tradition that still happens at RB+B Architects every week. While Bill Robb loved his work, he always made sure to prioritize his family and employees. Making its employees the top priority is one of the main reasons that RB+B Architects is still a highly successful firm. As of 2020, RB+B Architects is its 67th year of business and is the oldest, continuously operated architecture firm in Fort Collins.



RB+B Architects projects: Fossil Ridge High School (left), Odell Brewing Company (middle), The Coloradoan offices (right)



THE LASTING LEGACY OF WILLIAM B. ROBB

“Pervading, yet simple. Unique, yet honest. Such could describe the structures designed by William B. Robb, award-winning Fort Collins architect.” This quote from the Larimer County Guardian article “William Robb: Beautiful Designs” succinctly describes the feel of Bill Robb’s architectural body of work. Over the course of his 35-year career, Robb not only gained notoriety for his designs but also the respect of clients and peers. He approached every project with an open mind and treated it like a partnership so that the clients felt as much a part of the process as he was. This approach to client-architect relationships created strong partnerships and friendships that have lasted decades, with many clients who were extremely happy with the outcome of their projects. When Bill passed away in 1999, he was one of the only non-Catholics to receive a full funeral Mass at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church due to his long history of working on projects for the church.



THE LASTING LEGACY OF WILLIAM B. ROBB

Bill Robb understood the importance of not only meeting a client's needs, but also creating aesthetically pleasing additions to the community. It was always his goal to create a building that was well-thought out in all aspects; budget, construction, function, and aesthetics. He was quoted as saying, "There's more to architecture than just the drawings – it's the planning, the designing, the knowing of materials. You might design a pretty building, but if it can't be built, you haven't solved anything." For Bill Robb, the designing of the building was only the start and he made sure to be involved of every step in a project in order to provide the best product possible for his clients. David Neenan, of The Neenan Co., once compared Robb to "the master builders of old – the people who could design, engineer, and build their own buildings" and went on to say that he was the kind of architect who would have been success in any time period. This kind of high praise is commonly heard when Bill Robb is brought up in conversations, but you would rarely have heard Bill talking about his long list of accomplishments. He was a down-to-earth person who never asked for recognition or credit, instead focusing on the things he loved most, his family and his work.

THE LASTING LEGACY OF WILLIAM B. ROBB

Over the course of his career, William Robb significantly influenced the landscape and character of Fort Collins, as well as the local architecture industry itself. Many of his former employees have gone on to establish successful architecture firms in town, always with the support and encouragement of Bill. Buildings designed by Robb can be found in all parts of town and he often joked that his wife would accuse him of driving around purposely to look at his buildings. His love for the Fort Collins community is clear in his work, as well as his appreciation for the art of architecture itself. William B. Robb's philosophy about architecture, which helped define his outstanding career, is best summed up by one of his most well-known quotes.



“Throughout the ages it has been the simple buildings that solve a problem and have won the awards and become the representative buildings of their time.”

- William B. Robb

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Indian Meadows West Site Plan

Indian Meadows West Unit Floorplans

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Riffenburgh Elementary School Floorplan

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Poudre School District Administration Building Floorplans

Poudre School District Administration Building Section

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Eyestone Elementary School Floorplan

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Laurel Elementary School Floorplan

Juan Fullana School Floorplan

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